

DECEMBER 13, 2004

FALLUJAH 101: A HISTORY
OF THE CITY WE'RE DESTROYING

IN THESE TIMES

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CHEER UP, BLUE AMERICA!



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SPECIAL FEATURE

Cheer Up, Blue America!

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Dissent in the ranks is growing, and growing louder.

Cover photo by Laurent Gillieron / EPA

“As democracy is perfected,
the office of president represents,
more and more closely,
the inner soul of the people.
On some great and glorious day
the plain folks of the land
will reach their heart's desire
at last and the White House will be
adorned by a downright moron.

H.L. MENCKEN
BALTIMORE EVENING SUN, JULY 26, 1920



Editorial

Take a Breath By Joel Bleifuss

No doubt, some of you are thinking, “This loss may not be the end of the world, but I can see it from here.” Look again. ¶ George W. Bush’s reelection signifies defeat only if one defines

victory as winning this election, or any other. Of course, if progressives are ever to govern—create a more just society through exercising legislative control—they must first win elections. But electoral victories are not the starting point; rather, they are the natural outcome of successful political organization.

By that measure, progressives succeeded in 2004. An anti-Bush movement coalesced outside of the Democratic National Committee and its conservative surrogate, the Democratic Leadership Council. For the first time in recent history, progressives established viable national political groups like internet powerhouse MoveOn, coalition-built 527s like Americans Coming Together, and independent political initiatives like Howard Dean’s Democracy for America. The results, including John Kerry’s vote total (he received the second most votes of any presidential candidate in history), were impressive.

The last time a political campaign mobilized the progressive electorate was in 1988, when Jesse Jackson sought the Democratic nomination. Millions of voters rallied around his Rainbow Coalition banner, but no lasting political organization was built.

Jackson dropped the ball, progressives failed to pick it up and the movement dissipated.

There were lessons to be learned then, as there are lessons to be learned today.

The 2004 election proved that the Democratic Party needs leaders—not poll-driven consultants, who too often sacrifice principle for what appears expedient.

For example, Kerry voted for Bush’s Iraq war resolution, following the “guidance” offered by Democracy Corps, a non-profit “dedicated to making the government of the United States more responsive to the American people.”

On October 3, 2002, prior to the Iraq war resolution votes, Democracy Corps (founded in 1999 by James Carville, Stan Greenberg and Bob Shrum) advised Capitol Hill Democrats: “This decision [to support or oppose an Iraq war resolution] will take place in a setting where voters, by 10 points, prefer to vote for a member who supports a resolution to authorize force (50 to 40 percent).”

Imagine if Kerry and the 109 other Democrats in the House and Senate had voted against Bush’s plans for war. The national media would have been forced to

take notice and there would have been a vital public debate over invading Iraq.

Then there is the question of “values.” Kerry was right to ignore Bill Clinton’s advice that he endorse the 11 anti-gay ballot measures, but he could have attracted values voters by running as an unabashed populist. Writing in the *New York Times*, Tom Frank put it this way:

To short-circuit the Republican appeals to blue-collar constituents, Democrats must confront the cultural populism of the wedge issues with genuine economic populism. They must dust off their own majoritarian militancy instead of suppressing it; sharpen the distinctions between the parties instead of minimizing them; emphasize the contradictions of culture-war populism instead of ignoring them; and speak forthrightly about who gains and who loses from conservative economic policy.

That’s good advice, but will the Democratic establishment follow it? As “New” Democrats in Washington rush to imbue the party with “values,” progressives would do well to heed MoveOn.org, which sent its millions of members this post-election advice: “Our journey toward a progressive America has always been bigger than George Bush. The current leg is just beginning—we’re still learning how to build a citizen-based politics together. ... Today, we’ll take a breath. Tomorrow, we’ll keep moving toward the America we know is possible.” ■

Letters

Anti-Semites?

I was appalled and disappointed to read the hollow and blatantly anti-Semitic reasoning at the heart of the cover story "Is Iran Next?" by Tom Barry (October 25). Why allow discussion of a critical issue like the question of Iranian policy to be hijacked and smeared with thinly veiled racist canards? I became increasingly disturbed the more I read Barry's attempts to delegitimize neo-conservatives largely because they are Jews.

While neo-conservatives seek to reshape Middle Eastern politics as well as to strengthen the bonds that tie the United States to Israel (the only democracy in the region), to insinuate that they do so out of some illegitimate loyalty to Israel is truly disgusting. Barry discusses "Zionist convictions" as if they were self-evidently shameful. He simplistically and wrongly

equates Zionism in general with right-wing politics.

But the most outrageous section refers to the "dual agendas" of the right wing in the United States and Israel. The direct implication of this language, right out of standard anti-Semitic fare, is that Jews have dual loyalties. In case the point was not made explicitly enough by titling the section "dual agendas," Barry also helpfully includes a chart to badge each Jew with associations he considers to be proof of dual loyalty.

Your magazine should be ashamed to run this material. You are doing a disservice to critical progressive thinkers by aligning with anti-Semitic conspiracy theories more regularly found on the lunatic fringe right.

Dan Margolies
Norfolk, Va.



TOM BARRY RESPONDS

The issues that Margolies raises need to be discussed openly by all those concerned about the direction of U.S. foreign policy and the conflicts in the Middle East.

I leave it to In These Times readers to assess whether "hollow reasoning" and "anti-Semitism" shaped my article. However, I would like to respond directly to some of his other concerns.

Since the early '80s my research and writing about neo-conservatives have never aimed to "delegitimize" this political camp. The neoconservatives have established their own legitimacy in the U.S. political debate through their success in unifying large sectors of both the right and liberal communities around their radical agendas—from "democratic globalism" to "moral realism" to "U.S. supremacism." Although most of the leading neocon ideologues and strategists are Jews, there are many prominent neoconservatives who are Christian, including such luminaries as Michael Novak, James Woolsey, Frank Gaffney and William Bennett. Profiles and analytical articles about these and many other Christian neoconservatives can be found at the website of the Right Web project that I direct, www.irc.online.org.

The bonds between Israel and the United States have historically been strong. The neoconservatives cannot take credit for this

decades-long alliance. But they have sought to link U.S. policy to the regional agenda of the Likud hardliners—a goal they achieved in the last four years.

Zionism comes in many political colors. The neoconservatives are right-wing Zionists who have long criticized the socialist and liberal Zionist factions in Israel and in the United States. While advocating their own form of right-wing and free-market Zionism, the neoconservatives have also encouraged the growth of Christian Zionism and established opportunistic alliances with these fundamentalist Christians, while rarely criticizing the anti-Semitic statements of their leading spokesmen because they are regarded as the most trusted U.S. friends of an expansive Israeli state.

It is certainly true that criticism of the dual loyalties and dual agendas of the Zionists inside and outside government most often comes from self-proclaimed anti-Semites associated with the white supremacist and nativist right. It's also true that U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East is not solely a product of neoconservative manipulation. Rumsfeld, Cheney and the president himself are, after all, not neoconservatives but have for their diverse reasons entered into ideological and political alliances with the neoconservatives. Although any investigation of dual loyalties, dual agendas, and shared intelligence with Israel undertaken either by myself, the FBI, or the Senate Intelligence Committee will not reveal the array of interests shaping U.S. policy in the Middle East, I believe that public debate about U.S. security policy in the region should examine any relevant information about

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the right-wing Zionist convictions and associations of the key figures, such as Douglas Feith, who have helped formulate and manage this reckless policy.

A Colonized Population

Thank you for your article, "Injustice on the Rez" (October 25). I think it is important to note that the Bureau of Indian Affairs has its hands in a lot more than the jails on reservations. The words chosen by the Inspector General of the Department of the Interior describing the jails on reservations as a "national disgrace" with "conditions comparable to those found in third-world countries" accurately describe the conditions found on Indian reservations.

I grew up in Rapid City, South Dakota, which is not far from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The reservation sits in Shannon County, one of the poorest counties in the United States. Per capita income is about \$4,000. Unemployment is around 80 percent. Health and housing conditions are deplorable. Alcoholism is rampant. The infant mortality rate is high. And the life expectancy for adult males is 41. Nationally, the statistics aren't much better.

And while Tom DeLay's redistricting received attention in the press—with indictments forthcoming—similar maneuvers of gerrymandering and voter discrimination have

occurred on Pine Ridge, and go virtually unnoticed.

Is this the type of democracy we are bringing to Afghanistan and Iraq?

Shane Lamb
Nashville, Tenn.

Correction

Due to a production error one of the dates in Craig Aaron's "A Timeline of Failure" (November 19) was incorrect. The heading "April 2001" should have read "May 2001."



The posters in **A Presidential Rogues Gallery** hold their subjects to account, poke fun at their foibles and serve as a call to action. *In These Times* Art Director Seamus Holman's poster (above) is one of sixty satirical posters curated by the Center for the Study of Political Graphics (www.politicalgraphics.org) on view 10:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. through November 22 in the offices of *In These Times*.

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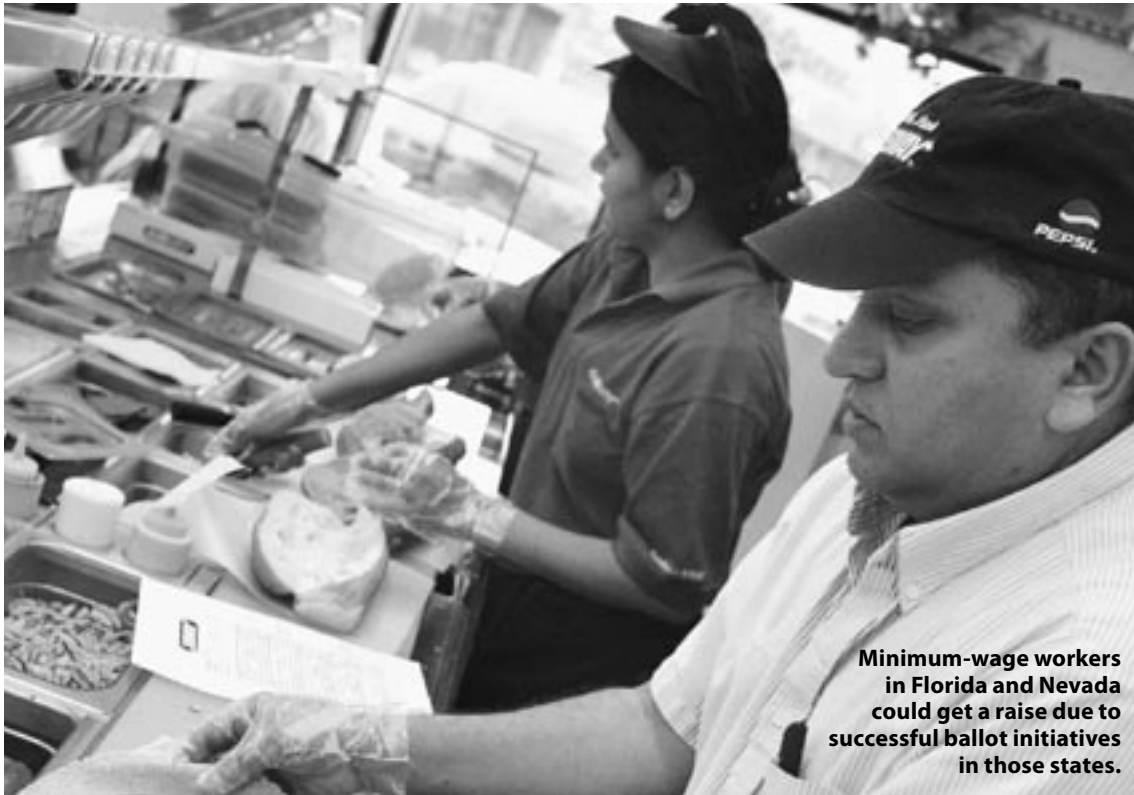
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Minimum-wage workers in Florida and Nevada could get a raise due to successful ballot initiatives in those states.

TIM BOYLE / GETTY

Measuring Ballot Measures

Despite focus on anti-gay referendums, progressive ballot initiatives may have been the real story *By Hans Johnson*

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE victory party. For progressives, the presidential campaign that drew unprecedented amounts of resources, passion, and participation ended in disaster. Bush won in large part by using one tool of the early progressive movement—the ballot measure—to whip up state-level hostility against same-sex marriage and entice a large slice of his supporters to the polls.

Voters who turned out for these measures influenced some other candidate races, too. The weak incumbent Senator Jim Bunning in Kentucky would likely have lost his reelection to insurgent Democrat Dan Mongiardo had the antigay amendment not drawn traditionalists to the polls, where it passed by a 3-to-1 margin. Not content with the bias-laden ballot drive, some Bluegrass State conservatives started a whispering campaign about Mongiardo's sexual

orientation—a tactic straight from the Karl Rove playbook. Bunning narrowly won, by less than 20,000 votes statewide.

In other foul news, Florida voters approved, 65 to 35 percent, an amendment to state privacy law that will place hurdles in the path of teenage girls seeking an abortion. In Arizona, Proposition 200, which lashes out at immigrants by demanding proof of citizenship for voting registration or obtaining a library card or going to the hospital, passed 56 to 44 percent.

But, beneath the sad finale of the presidential race and the passage of 11 statewide antigay referenda, an underreported and more encouraging picture emerges when one examines state-by-state outcomes.

Progressive groups closely tied their get-out-the-vote tactics to bread-and-butter issues like better wages and health coverage, which helped to lure millions of new or infrequent voters to the polls. In a few

states, progressive candidates linked their platforms and messages directly to the ballot proposals, emphasizing a people-oriented approach to government and giving voters a crisp contrast to well-funded conservatives.

In Florida and Nevada, two states where Bush narrowly edged out Kerry, progressives gained sweeping wins on proposals to lift the state minimum wage by one dollar and peg future increases to inflation. The measures won with 71 and 68 percent, respectively. And, in Colorado and Montana, progressive campaigns to raise tobacco taxes to pay for both children's health care and prescription drug coverage for the needy not only passed, but helped Democratic candidates regain power in state government.

"We made a real effort to turn out low-income women and Native Americans," says Diane Sands, a former Montana state legislator and a leading strategist with progressive campaigns in the state. "In Missoula County, where I live, we saw 90 percent of those registered cast votes, which is incredible. Absentees, who are usually just three or four thousand, cast 12 thousand ballots here. Administrators had to go out and copy more ballots since so many people showed up."

Montana's coordinated appeal proved potent for progressives. Democrat Brian Schweitzer, who made a very strong run for Senate in 2000 by calling for affordable prescription drugs, reprised those appeals this year to nab the governorship. And Democratic candidates, buoyed by once-a-decade redistricting that happens later in Montana than elsewhere, picked up six seats in the state Senate to take control, and two seats in the House to achieve near parity.

In Colorado, two efforts helped raise turnout and tip races toward state Democrats. Amendment 35, the tobacco-tax increase, passed overwhelmingly, 61 to 39 percent. And Amendment 37, which mandates 10 percent of public energy from renewable sources, proved a rallying point for environmentalists and allies, passing 53 to 47 percent. Empowered by these two vote magnets, Democrats won the open U.S. Senate seat and retook the Colorado House and Senate. In doing so, they checked their right-wing governor, Bill Owens, whose initiative to undermine job protections for state workers failed by more than 3-to-2 at the polls.

In Washington and Oregon, progres-

sives used ballot measure appeals, such as stopping the strangulation of government through tax caps and ending nuclear waste dumps, to reach new voters and boost turnout. Each state's senate, which had been closely divided, tipped for Democrats. In fact, in the 11 most carefully watched skirmishes for partisan control of state legislatures, Democrats won seven and ballot measures played a major role in this success.

Finally, in a widely overlooked dynamic, progressive issues outdrew reactionary issues in some key head-to-head gauges of voter enthusiasm. In Montana, for instance, about 442,000 people voted on the anti-same-sex-marriage measure, Initiative 96, which passed 66 to 34 percent. But even more voters weighed in on Initiative 147, to keep residents protected from poison by banning use of cyanide in state mining. And a still greater number, more than 445,000, voted on Initiative 149, which increases tobacco taxes to pay for health care and prescription drugs, as well as Initiative 148, which legalized small quantities of marijuana for medical purposes. In fact, more voters cast ballots on the last two initiatives than voted for governor.

A similar margin occurred in Nevada, where more voters cast ballots on Question 6, the minimum wage increase, than in the state's U.S. Senate race.

The successes in Montana and Nevada bear out what progressives have known for a long time: Americans will choose hope over fear. But they won't make that choice in a vacuum. Well-funded, strategic campaigns whose messages are reinforced by candidates are a crucial part of a winning formula.

As progressives plot strategy for 2006, look for a plan that uses ballot measures, and even a federal constitutional amendment, to spark a national debate about kitchen-table issues. Such a blueprint will provide a preexisting structure for the next presidential campaign and set a clear direction for the Democrats as they build on achievements in list-building and turnout. It will also give progressive voters a clear choice at the polls and an unmistakable stake in the outcome.

For a more detailed look at ballot measure results, visit the Web site of the Ballot Initiative Strategy Center, www.ballot.org. ■

HANS JOHNSON, a board member of the BISC Foundation, writes on labor, religion and politics from Washington, D.C.

IN SHORT

Rotten to the Root

A battery of investigations and a French court's threat to indict Vice President Dick Cheney have forced oil construction giant Halliburton to admit that one of its subsidiaries was involved in a massive bribery scandal. About \$180 million was given to the Nigerian government in exchange for a \$4 billion natural gas plant contract to the consortium TSKJ, which includes the M. W. Kellogg Co. of Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg Brown & Root.

HALLIBURTON

The Associated Press reported that on November 5 Halliburton filed a statement with the Securities and Exchange Commission that stated, "We understand from the ongoing governmental and other investigations that payments may have been made to Nigerian officials." These alleged payments, which were shuffled through secret slush fund accounts, mostly occurred from 1995 to 2000, while Cheney was acting CEO of Halliburton.

No direct connection has been made between Cheney and the bribery scandal. But earlier this summer Halliburton attempted to shield the vice president from allegations by firing former consultant and KBR Chairman Albert "Jack" Stanley for "receiving improper personal benefits" totaling \$5 million. Stanley had been hired by Cheney in 1998. Most of the probe's attention has been directed at London lawyer Jeffrey Tesler for his dual role as Halliburton middleman and financial advisor to the late Nigerian dictator, Gen. Sani Abacha.

As required by disclosure laws, Halliburton told its stockholders about the SEC investigation. The June 11 report denied culpability but stated, "There can be no assurance that government authorities would not conclude otherwise."

The announcement largely went unnoticed at the time because Wall Street was closed to mark the funeral of former President Ronald Reagan.

—Scott Witmer

The No-Partner Myth

Will Israel take steps to address Palestinian grievances or continue myth-making? **By Neve Gordon**

THE LEADER AND SYMBOL of the Palestinian people is dead. His departure from the political scene has far-reaching implications, particularly for Israeli-Palestinian relations.

The official Israeli line for the past four years has been that there is no Palestinian partner and that Yasser Arafat is *persona non grata*. Arafat has been blamed for being personally involved in planning and encouraging terror attacks. He has been accused of using funds donated by the European Union to finance terrorist activity and of establishing close links with those “forces

of evil”—Iran and Iraq. There has also been criticism over the mismanagement and embezzlement of public resources and the use of authoritarian methods to control the Palestinian administration and security apparatus.

While some of these allegations are no doubt true, they have been disseminated again and again by the Israeli government and media in order to create a “no-partner” myth—a myth designed to convince the world that Arafat was an obstacle to



peace, the major reason why the Oslo process collapsed.

Had it not been for Arafat, it was asserted, negotiations could have been resumed, the cycle of violence broken

and ultimately peace attained. World leaders like Bush and Blair and many other shapers of public opinion all sang from the same hymn sheet, helping to promote the notion that Arafat was the primary hindrance to a just settlement.

Like every political myth, the “no-partner” one has been used to conceal rather than to reveal. It aimed to obscure the fundamental grievances fueling the conflict, namely that Israel has been occupying Palestinian land for 37 years and that the number of Jewish settlers actually doubled during the Oslo process—the years Israel was ostensibly preparing to withdraw from the territories.

The “no-partner” myth was also used to undercut basic Palestinian demands, which Arafat represented: Israel’s full withdrawal to the 1967 borders, the establishment of a Palestin-

Losing Their Religion

Some Dems believe the party should turn away from its secular history. **By Scott Goodstein**

THE DEMOCRATS’ BIG LOSS ON Election Day has brought on much hand wringing. Sen. Diane Feinstein (D-Calif.), for example, blamed at least a portion of Kerry’s defeat on San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsome’s push for gay marriage.

The debate over whether the Democrats could win more voters by moving the party further to the right or by becoming the opposition party is just starting. The party’s future direction will be clarified in January or early February when the 440 members of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) vote in a new party chair to replace Terry McAuliffe, who has served for four years—and through two presidential election losses.

Sides already are being drawn between those who believe a more thorough religious appeal is needed and those who argue the party should maintain its historic secular approach.

The potential candidates include: Simon Rosenberg, the founder of Joe Lieberman’s New Democratic Network (www.newdem.org), which pushes a values-based message; Harold Ickes, a leader of America Coming Together and the Media Fund, which created many of the opposition ads in this election (a longtime Clinton operative and chair of Hillary Clinton’s PAC, his candidacy raises the question of whether Hillary is positioning herself for a 2008 run); Denver Mayor Wellington Webb; Al Gore’s campaign manager Donna Brazille (she has grassroots support from her longtime party experience and name recognition as a political commentator); Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack, a moderate on gun laws and a Midwestern populist; and Howard Dean.

The outcome of the DNC election will determine the relationship between the party and the dozens of activist groups that evolved this campaign season. The millions of members of the 527 issue education

groups which operated independently of the Democratic Party, clearly expressed their views for more progressive policies.

The Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) Web site (www.ndol.org) argues that the party needs to resolve the “moral values” and trust gap between Democrats and Republicans. “Democrats got clobbered,” the DLC says. “We need a heartland strategy to go with a positive message that reaches the heart as well as the wallet.”

But Democrats need only go back four years to understand how perilous a more religious-based approach could be. In the first test of a regrouped Democratic Party following Al Gore’s 2000 presidential loss, a special election was held to replace the deceased Rep. Norman Sisisky (D-Va.), a long time congressman from Pat Robertson’s neck of the state. The Democrats attempted to out-religion the religious right by running television ads proclaiming their candidate would return prayer to school and bring more religion to government programs. The candidate—Louise Lucas—lost to the right-wing Republican 52 to 48 percent. ■

SCOTT GOODSTEIN, who has spent the last 10 years managing campaigns, is political director for punkvoter.com.

ian capital in East Jerusalem, and the recognition of the rights of Palestinian refugees.

Finally, it sought to destroy Arafat's persona, for he had become an international symbol of resistance, a symbol of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. And as the embodiment of this struggle, he had managed to unify Palestinian society—both exiled and occupied—and thus strengthen his people's national identity.

This potent myth accordingly suggested that the escalating conflict was due to the absence of a partner, rather than to Israel's unwillingness to address Palestinian grievances and demands.

Israel's problem is that Arafat's death will not resolve anything. The reasons for the conflict will persist. Prime Minister Sharon must therefore choose between two radically

different courses of action. He can decide to address Palestinian claims, which undoubtedly would entail painful compromises by Israel but could eventually lead to peace in the region. Alternatively, he can fashion a new myth, one that would again divert the public's gaze from the real issues, and enable Israel to continue expropriating Palestinian land and destroying the population's infrastructure of existence. This latter option is the one Sharon will most likely embrace. The question then becomes: What new myth will be created? ■

NEVE GORDON teaches politics at Ben-Gurion University, Israel, and is editor of *From the Margins of Globalization: Critical Perspectives on Human Rights* (Rowman and Littlefield September 2004). He can be reached at neve_gordon@yahoo.com.

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APPALL-O-METER

1.5 Not So Cunning Stunt

How naughty is the c-word? So naughty that the *Chicago Tribune* went into a code-red freakout when executives learned that the paper was about to publish a story on the word's apparently growing vogue.

According to the *Chicago Sun-Times*, a squad of Trib mandarins—including editors on the tippy-top of the masthead—corralled other employees and spent the better part of a night

in late October at the printing plant, yanking the "Woman News" section from the next day's edition. Many emerged from the Freedom Center, as the plant is named, smudged with ink but no doubt satisfied that scandal to public morals had been averted.

The controversial story, headlined "You C-nt Say That (or Can You?)," quoted professors and writers on how and why the anatomical vulgarity was making inroads into polite society. Interestingly, "cunt" was never spelled out.

0.9 Johns For W.

In the wake of the Nov. 2 debacle, blue state sophisticates have given vent to all manner of recrimination against their rustic compatriots in the flyover. "Obtuse," "moralizing" and "narrow-minded" are only a few of the epithets spotted in newspapers in the following days.

Yet our rubicund brethren did show some signs of moral nuance. Churchill County, Nevada, for example—a place that had voted overwhelm-

ingly to ban gay marriage in 2002, and which was safely pro-Bush this year—somehow found it in its heart to permit harlotry in its midst.

Church groups raised 1,400 petition signatures in the sparsely populated county, forcing the pro/con vote on brothels, according to the

Toronto Globe and Mail. And for a while, the forces of uprightness seemed destined to prevail. George Flint, executive director of the Nevada Brothel Owners Association, traveled to the county to campaign against

the measure. "I felt a little like Christ on the early part of Good Friday," he told the *Globe and Mail*. Flint is also a minister/operator of a wedding chapel.

In the end, cosmopolitan tolerance prevailed, to the consternation of pro-ban organizer Alan Perazzo. "I'm as confused as the next guy," he told the *Globe and Mail*. "We voted 72 per cent for Bush and 63 per cent to keep the brothels."

0.3 Don't Preach, Organize!

In the American hinterland, preachers speak in tongues, handle snakes, and sometimes run brothels. In the Canadian hinterland, they form unions. According to the *Thunder Bay's Source*, a few clerical activists within the United Church of Canada plan to organize 4,000 pastors throughout the country. The rabble-rousers claim the church exploits them with sweatshop conditions and wages. A group of Ontario clergy met with representatives of the Canadian Auto Workers earlier this month.

—Dave Mulcahey



While the 2004 election was a disaster for most Democrats, Rep. Jan Schakowsky, a member of the Progressive Caucus, was easily reelected to her fourth term representing the 9th Congressional District in Illinois. In *These Times* spoke with her about the state of progressive politics.

Recently House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas) has come under fire for ethical lapses involving his PAC. Why are Democrats so reluctant to hold Republicans accountable, when Republicans vehemently go after the smallest impropriety committed by a Democrat?

There's an explicit criticism of Democrats here: That Republicans are better at this kind of smearing and negative campaigning. There's a whole infrastructure to go after Democrats. There's no question about it. But you're seeing a change and that's the important thing. You now see Nancy Pelosi on the floor raising ethical questions, calling for more action by the House. The charge against DeLay was brought by a Democrat from Texas, Chris Bell. Bell is now out of the House, a victim of the probably illegal redistricting that DeLay engaged in. I think there is a sense now that the gloves are off. We're seriously gonna fight back.

The Republicans have literally shut down democracy in the House of Representatives, not letting Democrats into conference committees, violating, if not rules of the House, longstanding traditions of the House in terms of the minority party's right to add amendments and participate in debate. They've gone as far as illegal activities—offering bribes on the floor of the House, holding votes open for three hours.

In the past we've thought the American people don't really care that much about process, that it sounds whiny when you complain about it. But I think it's really important for Democrats to not be party to this breakdown of democracy in the U.S. Congress.

You have called for an end to the ongoing genocide in Darfur, Sudan. What has the United States done to stop this humanitarian crisis?

There's a certain irony here, at least in terms of rhetoric. The United States has probably gone further than any other nation in calling this genocide. The House of Representatives, and I was one of the leaders in this, passed a resolution calling it "genocide" when the administration was still reluctant to do so. We got the resolution passed in the U.S. Senate, so Congress was on record this summer calling it genocide.

I went with Donald Payne and John Conyers to meet with Kofi Annan the first day of the Democratic Convention. I really got the sense that one of the fallouts from this war in Iraq is that the United States has lost so much credibility it's very hard for us to push any agenda in the United Nations. It's like, "Well who are you to be telling us what to do?" But in the meantime, the atrocities, the human rights abuses and the scale of the humanitarian crisis continues to mount. It's not as if there's been a lack of clarity in what's going on there—it's just been slow in coming. We see repeated genocides occurring, and the world standing by, acknowledging it, naming it and still not doing enough.

Barack Obama will become only the third African-American since Reconstruction to be elected to the U.S. Senate. What has caused white voters

to change their attitudes toward African-American candidates since the 1983 Chicago mayoral campaign of Harold Washington?

There is something about Barack Obama that causes people to feel, "You are the leader we've been waiting for." I don't just mean "You are the black leader we've been waiting for." It's "You are someone who represents what we want in a 21st Century candidate."

He has found the language to connect with everyone, to inspire people, to take on the cynicism of the political arena, and

The Gloves are Off

By Aaron Sarver

speak of unity and hope. To express that we don't have to always be pitted against each other, racially, economically, geographically, in terms of our sexual orientation. You asked "Why don't Democrats go harder after Republicans?" and as things are I think we have needed to and may still need to. But ultimately I think the answer is to elect candidates and leaders like Barack Obama, who are going to lead us away from that, make us feel proud and good about ourselves. The people who supported Barack Obama felt a sense of pride in his primary victory and now feel good

about themselves, not just good about Barack, but good about themselves to be supporting him. ■

To hear a longer version of this interview, visit the Web site of In These Times' radio show, "Fire on the Prairie" (www.fireontheprairie.com).





Stages of Grief

IT IS ON REFRIGERATORS THROUGHOUT THE LAND: the map of California and the West Coast, the upper Midwest and the Northeast annexed to and named “The United States of Canada,” the red states below labeled “Jesusland.”

The red-and-blue, them-versus-us iconography so beloved by the press—imposed on us four years ago—makes our divisions seem dramatic indeed. Of course, it visually overstates the strength of evangelicals in our country. Nonetheless, when coupled with Cheney’s immediate claim of a “mandate” (not to mention Bush’s idiotic “political capital” boast), the sea of red sent many of us into a deep depression.

But, as the Shirelles reminded us, the darkest hour is just before dawn. So it’s time to review the stages of post-Kerry-defeat grief so we can heal ourselves and, indeed, move on.

STAGE 1: SHOCK Many of us were barely functional on Wednesday, wondering how could it be that a guy so obviously and patently incompetent and deceptive, as documented by so many sources—and a faith-based zealot to boot—got reelected?

STAGE 2: SHOCK AND AWE We were sickened, but awestruck, that Cheney had the chutzpah to claim a mandate with only 286 electoral votes and a 130,000-vote margin of victory in Ohio, which various reporters and investigators already find very suspect. We were awed that Bush insisted that what you do with political capital is spend it right away—although we shouldn’t have been, given what this thinking has done for the deficit.

STAGE 3: ALIENATION So maybe we accepted that the nation is *not* dominated by a bunch of Bible-banging Neanderthals. But depression returned when we kept thinking it was dominated by ignorant dunces. Bob Herbert and Bob McChesney, both citing a University of Maryland poll, reported that nearly 70 percent of Bush supporters believed there was “clear evidence” that Saddam Hussein was working closely with al Qaeda; a third were convinced WMDs had been found in Iraq. What part of the 9/11 hearings, the bestseller list for the last six months and extensive news coverage did these people miss?

Of course, most of them were probably watching Fox News, whose viewers have been demonstrated to be more ignorant about current affairs than viewers of other news sources.

STAGE 4: WAIT A MINUTE By Friday, even Republicans were in on this one. Lyn Nofziger, Former Reagan adviser, David Brooks, Garry Wills and of course, Paul Krug-

man, Bob Herbert, Mark Crispin Miller, and many others were challenging the “mandate” claim and debunking the notion that “moral values”—e.g., homophobia, opposition to abortion and belief in the virgin birth and creationism (not to mention “the rapture,” which, fortunately, always makes me think of the hit song by Blondie)—prompted the majority of Republicans to vote for Bush.

As Gary Langer, director of polling for ABC News noted, “moral values” can mean a lot of things; 15 percent of non-churchgoers and 12 percent of liberals chose it as the most important issue to them. Exit polls documented that 55 percent of voters said abortions should be legal and a whopping 60 percent supported either gay marriage (25 percent) or civil unions (another 35 percent).

STAGE 5: DEFIANCE AND ASSERTION This phase is really building steam, and it is where we need to be, ASAP. Both NPR and ABC news, the day after the election, featured stories about “moral values,” which included counterpoints from religious leaders and everyday people who asserted that the discussion should focus, centrally, on the dubious morality of war and bombing innocent people, on issues of economic justice, on the environment, on the lack of health insurance for 45 million, and on the staggering rate of child poverty in the United States. These are moral values, and the Democrats must claim them. Now.

Defiance and assertion also mean redefining “the mandate.” The Republicans are determined to cast the electorate as primarily a group of faith-based anti-government conservatives. The Democrats must produce another representation. This is not to dismiss the disturbing rise of people who are determined to bring fundamentalism into government policy. But it *is* to assert the truth: Bible bangers are not the new majority.

STAGE 6: MOBILIZE The Democrats and progressives need to do what the Republicans started doing back in the late 1970s: Focus on the state legislatures, congressional races and, hey, let’s get some Secretaries of State on our side next time around. Young women, and women of all ages, are going to need to fight like never before in the face of a guaranteed assault on *Roe v. Wade*. And the previous four years and this election emphasize how important media reform is, particularly the reinstatement of the Fairness Doctrine, which the Reagan Administration abolished in 1987. We see the results of too much Rush and O’Reilly without any balance: voters who don’t have the facts.

This is our country; it is not a revival tent. We must continue to fight to save it. ■

Democrats and progressives need to focus on state legislatures, congressional races, and get some Secretaries of State on our side next time around.

SUSAN J. DOUGLAS is a professor of communications at the University of Michigan and author of *Where the Girls Are: Growing up Female with the Mass Media*.



Viewpoint *By Mark Crispin Miller*

Let's Get Real

How better
to commit
the perfect
crime than
to insist
it never
happened?

BUSH & COMPANY'S THEFT OF THE ELECTION was a crime so obvious that it requires more effort to deny than to affirm. This rip-off was as flagrant as the L.A. cops' assault on Rodney King, Kerry's stellar soldiering in Vietnam, or Bush's lousy record in the Texas Air National Guard, and yet this national calamity is being dismissed as a delusion.

The reason for the Busheviks' denial is as obvious as the theft itself: How better to commit the perfect crime than to insist it never happened?

And yet what makes this stance so dangerous is not just its use on the right, but its prevalence throughout the corporate media (MSNBC's Keith Olbermann excepted) and even among those on the left. To charge that the Republicans did not legitimately rout the Democrats provokes the counter-charge that such claims "hurt the cause" by floating angry fantasy instead of scientific fact.

Rather than urge cautiousness, such automatic counter-claims quash all discussion of electoral fraud, as if the very notion were far-fetched. "This charge was false, so all charges must be wrong," is the response that Karl Rove wants from us, as we will then conclude, conveniently for him, "Case closed!"

A niggling over-focus on particulars is just the attitude that propagandists seek to cultivate because it helps them cloud the issue. Thus were a few trivial aspects of John Kerry's military record used to call that entire record into question. And thus did Rove succeed in driving journalists away from Bush's scandalous Guard service by distracting them with the canard that those incriminating documents revealed by CBS were fakes—or rather, that *one* of them might not have been authentic.

To let ourselves believe that the "election" was legitimate because this claim or that has been disproved (apparently) is to *not* honor reason. On the contrary, a veritable sea of evidence, statistical as well as anecdotal and circumstantial, supports the claim that Bush, again, was not elected by the people.

To nod agreement that this was indeed an honest win is to *forget* how Bush was shoehorned into

office in the first place; to *ignore* the ease with which electronic totals can be changed without a trace; to *suppress* the fact that Diebold, Sequoia and ES&S—the major manufacturers of touch screen voting machines and central tabulators—are owned and run by Bush Republicans, who have made no secret of their partisan intentions; to *deny* the value of the exit polls, which turn out to have been "mistaken" only in the swing states; to *downplay* the weird inflation of the Bush vote in county after county, where the number of votes for president was somehow higher than the number of voters who turned out; to *ignore*

the bald chicanery of the Bush supporters who ran the central polling station in Ohio's Warren County and forced out the press and poll monitors so they could count the vote in secret; to *forget* the numerous accounts of vote fraud coast to coast throughout the prior weeks of early voting; to *overlook* the fact that every single "glitch" or "error" that has been reported favors Bush; to *ignore* the countless

instances of ballots—absentee, provisional—thrown away or left uncounted; to *forget* that the civilian vote abroad (some four million Americans) was being mishandled by the Pentagon (which had somehow become responsible for doing the State Department's job); and to *ignore* the many dirty tricks reported—the polling places quickly relocated at the last minute, the fake voter-registration drives, the thousands of Americans who found themselves not on the rolls, the police road-blocks, the bullying pro-Bush poll workers, the machines that kept translating votes for Kerry into votes for Bush. And so on.

To forget or ignore all this and to accept—on faith—the mere say-so of Bush & Company (and our compliant media) is to make clear that you are not a member of what the Busheviks deride as "the reality-based community." Those who help discredit false reports are doing that community, and this erstwhile democracy, a precious service. But, those who would abort the whole inquiry in the name of science or journalistic probity and "closure" are putting that community, and this nation, at grave risk. ■



MARK CRISPIN

MILLER is a professor of media studies at NYU and author, most recently, of *Cruel and Unusual: Bush/Cheney's New World Order. The DVD of his new film, A Patriot Act, is available at www.patriotnation.us.*



A Unified Front

THREE DAYS AFTER THE REELECTION OF President George W. Bush further marginalized the African-American community, two of black America's most prominent leaders joined in a rare public discussion on what to do next.

Pulled together by WVON-AM, an influential black-owned radio station, Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam and the Rev. Jesse Jackson of Rainbow/PUSH spent two hours of commercial-free airtime in a wide-ranging conversation with host Cliff Kelley.

The conversation touched upon many bases of the black movement, from the 1960s to the present. Both men have deep roots in that movement and represent two of its major branches.

Jackson, heir to civil rights icon the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., pushes civic agitation as a method to fight injustice. With King, he helped lead the fight to integrate the recalcitrant South. When King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) took a northern detour to Chicago, Jackson came and stayed. He broke from the SCLC but incorporated its ethos into Operation PUSH, the group he founded. Operation PUSH soon joined the SCLC, the NAACP and the National Urban League as a national power in the civil rights fraternity. Jackson aligned with Farrakhan in 1984, during his first presidential run. That connection proved troublesome for both men.

Farrakhan had been well known in the black community as spokesman for the Hon. Elijah Muhammad's separatist Nation of Islam until his 1975 death. After a two-year period in which he pledged fealty to Muhammad's successor and son, Wallace D. Muhammad, Farrakhan broke away to revive his mentor's separatist path. By the time he joined with Jackson in 1984, Farrakhan had earned a reputation as one of the most eloquent proponents of Elijah Muhammad's Black Nationalist message.

But some of his allegorical oratory was not quite ready for prime time. He got tagged with the anti-Semitic label for some reckless rhetoric, and that taint subsequently rubbed off on Jackson's fledgling campaign. The two men parted ways, at least publicly.

One of the first revealing facts to emerge from the November 5 discussion was that Jackson and Farrakhan have maintained private contact despite the public stance of estrangement. And although they stress differing strategies for African-American empowerment—Farrakhan focuses internally on self-reliance and behavioral change, while Jackson prefers fighting externally for equitable treatment and

structural change—they said the election results reveal the urgent need for a more unified approach.

Jackson also noted that the election was not all gloom and doom for African-Americans. Black voter turnout increased 25 percent from 2000. What's more, the Congressional Black Caucus gained four new members—former Kansas City, Mo., Mayor Emanuel Cleaver, Houston, Texas NAACP President Al Green, Milwaukee State Senator Gwen Moore, all elected to House seats from their respective states, and Illinois State Senator Barack Obama, elected to the U.S. Senate. But, Jackson pointed out, those gains offer little resistance to four more years of conservative hostility to issues of social justice and civil rights.

The black electorate awarded Bush 10 percent of their vote, about a percentage point more than he got in 2000. But Bush pulled nearly 16 percent of the black vote in the crucial battleground state of Ohio. Analysts contend that conservative blacks more likely to vote for Bush were pulled to the polls by the same-sex marriage amendment on the Ohio ballot.

Jackson rebuked those black preachers who bought the GOP's morals argument, saying that the right wing is adept at attaching moral arguments to unjust policies. "They wrapped democracy and Christianity around slavery," he said. "For them, segregation was God's will."

Although the Democrats are now bemoaning their alienation from the religious heartland, Farrakhan and Jackson urged the party not to cede notions of morality to the GOP.

"We have to engage again in the morals debate," Jackson said, encouraging Democrats to shift the meaning of morality to issues involved with serving the poor. "Jesus' mission statement drives my politics," he said.

Farrakhan criticized both campaigns for ignoring the issues of the poor. "The Kerry campaign continuously talked about the middle class, but there was not one word referring to the poor," he noted.

The radio discussion was wide ranging, informative and even revealing to those with a particular interest in the trajectory of these two black leaders—arguably black America's top two. But they broke little programmatic ground, other than hinting they might take their duet on the road.

Still, Jackson's willingness to face the controversy sure to follow his public rapprochement with Farrakhan is telling. It reflects a new level of concern for the well-being of the black community as America heads into a right-wing future. ■

The conversation between Jackson and Farrakhan revealed the two had maintained contact despite being publicly estranged.

SALIM MUWAKKIL is a senior editor at *In These Times*, a contributing columnist to the *Chicago Tribune* and a *Crime and Communities Media Fellow* of the *Open Society Institute*.



Viewpoint *By Stephen J. Fortunato, Jr.*

Judicial Chainsaw Massacre

By the end of Bush's second term, close to 50 percent of all federal judges could thank him for their positions.

PLAGIARIZING FROM HIS DEFEATED RIVAL, ON November 3 George W. Bush promised the nation "a season of hope." For those who view the U.S. Supreme Court and the federal judiciary as protectors of minorities from unlawful discrimination and as guarantors of civil liberties and constitutional rights, the reality that lies ahead is more aptly described by Rimbaud: "a season in hell."

Bush is poised, chainsaw in hand, to redefine the meaning of justice and fairness through the nominations he will be making to the federal bench. With Chief Justice William Rehnquist ailing, his first appointment is probably not far away, and Justice Antonin Scalia is the likely replacement. Bush repeatedly has praised Scalia and Justice Clarence Thomas for embodying the judicial philosophy he admires. The short translation of these endorsements is that Bush wants judges who will not locate in the Constitution any rights not expressly enumerated, despite the Ninth Amendment's declaration that the lack of an exhaustive list "shall not be construed to deny or disparage [other rights] retained by the people."

Given the age and health of the Supreme Court members, Bush will likely appoint three or four justices during his second term. But because the Supreme Court considers only 90 or so cases a year that go to full decision, he will do his greatest damage in the lower courts. The federal judiciary of about 800 judges turns over 20 to 25 percent every four years. Bush already has appointed 22 percent of all sitting federal judges, and by the end of his second term, close to 50 percent of all federal judges could thank him for their positions.

Bush screens his appointments primarily for their right-wing ideology in matters of civil rights, civil liberties and criminal law. A study published in July by law professors Robert Carp, Kenneth Manning and Ronald Stidham in the respected legal professional journal *Judicature* evaluates the decisions of Bush appointees and compares them to those made by other federal judges dating back to the Johnson administration. Not surprisingly, the George W. Bush judges were rivaled only by those of Ronald Reagan, siding 65 percent of the time with the government against

claims by individuals seeking to vindicate or expand constitutional rights. This was as true for Bush's female and minority appointees as it was for his white ones.

Bush's ideological litmus test compounds a long-standing problem with federal judicial nominations: a lack of relevant experience. For instance, in the domain of criminal law, according to annual studies published by *The Harvard Law Review*, 20 percent to 25 percent of the Supreme Court's full opinions address criminal matters in each term, yet no present member of the

High Court ever defended a person accused of a felony during their pre-judicial careers. On the other hand, while only 5 or 6 percent of the Court's opinions involved appeals of administrative decisions, four of the Court's members—Rehnquist, Scalia, Thomas and Breyer have backgrounds in the area of government regulation. Overall, the federal bench is no different, with 40 percent of the judges drawn from the ranks of pros-

ecutors and many others from corporate law firms.

Many groups are in jeopardy, but perhaps those most in peril are young African-American males. It is not hard to make the argument that the U.S. criminal justice system is systemically racist, given African-Americans account for nearly 45 percent of more than 2 million in jail or prison, while comprising only 12 percent of the general population. Six of 10 juveniles presently confined are minority youth. This state of events is decimating communities of color, and Bush's appointments, driven by right-wing ideology and lacking any experience working on behalf of people from poor communities, will only exacerbate this problem.

The most that progressives can hope for is that a stealth moderate will slip through the vetting process. Some shrewd candidates have been positioning themselves already. Take Professor Cass Sunstein of the University of Chicago Law School, a prolific author often described as a moderate, or even a "liberal." Writing in the fall issue of *Dissent*, he pandered to the Bush administration: "By historical standards, the Bush administration has acted with considerable restraint and with commendable respect for political liberty. It has not attempted to restrict speech or the democratic process in any way." As I said: a season in hell. ■



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is an associate justice with the Rhode Island Superior Court.

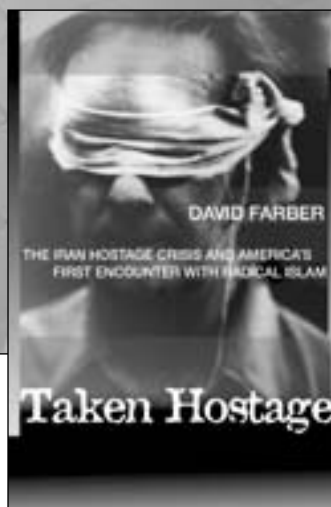
Open for Thought

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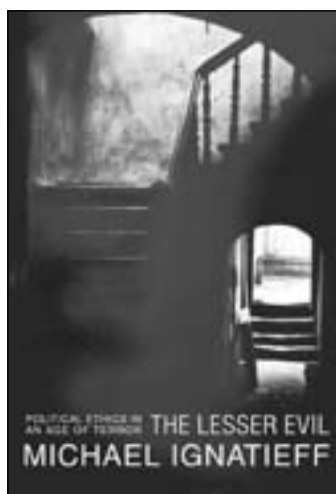
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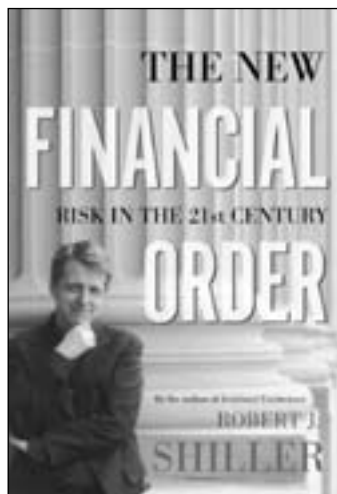
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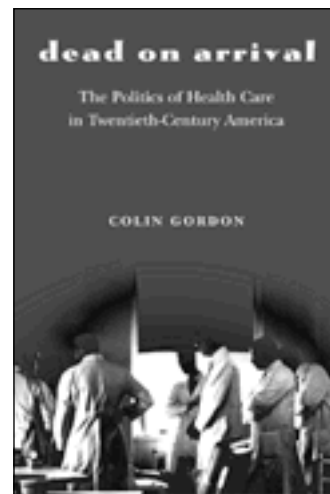
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C BLUE A

(It's time t

What's on the media agenda?

By David Brock

Progressive values and ideals were not rejected on Election Day. That's the first thing we should keep in mind. This was a very close campaign, too close to draw any conclusions about the public's embrace or dismissal of any ideology. Indeed, there is still much reason to believe the public shares our core values: equal treatment and opportunity for all, strong communities, hard work, compassion as a way of life rather than a political slogan, greater economic opportunity, affordable and effective healthcare, and an educational system that makes all of this possible. These are our values, and they are America's values.

Although our values weren't rejected (no matter how often you hear otherwise) we were defeated, and there are things we'll have to do better in the future.

First we must build a progressive infrastructure of think tanks, media monitors, issue advocacy organizations, and media outlets to compete with the right. Fortunately, this has already begun, with groups like the Center for American Progress, Air America and my organization, *Media Matters for America*.

Many progressives have realized over the last few years that the right enjoys a tremendous advantage in the long-term fight to define the playing field on which short-term electoral battles are fought. That's one reason conservatives have electoral success that

is disproportionate to the quality of their ideas. Their think tanks relentlessly promote right-wing policy proposals. Their media outlets like Fox News and the *Washington Times* act as little more than a newsletter for the Republican Party, and their media monitoring organizations pressure the mainstream media to do likewise. Just as importantly, media criticism on the right isn't confined to a few organizations, but is instead fully integrated into all levels of the conservative message machine, from President Bush down to local activists.

Progressives have begun in recent years to address this infrastructure gap: We have started building effective and essential new organizations and activist networks; we've brought millions of new activists, volunteers and voters into progressive politics.

The challenge now is to maintain and increase these efforts. After all, conservatives brought millions of new activists into the process as well. We know theirs will remain engaged; if ours don't, the next election really will be an overwhelming rejection of our values.

And that's the second thing we should remember. Despite all the talk of 2004 as being the most important ideological fight of our lifetime, that isn't quite true. The next big fight is always the most important of our lifetimes. The election of 2004 is over. The question now is whether we are broken or merely beaten, whether we retreat and cede to conservatives the dominance they claim to have already won, or whether we continue the hard work of slowly but steadily moving America forward. ■

DAVID BROCK is president and CEO of Media Matters for America.



Progressives need to find new ways to amplify their message.

CHEER UP, AMERICA!

(to stop moping and get to work.)

Progressives displayed impressive creativity and tenacity in the run up to the election. They will need to keep that momentum going to successfully recapture the American imagination in 2008. *In These Times* asked key progressive figures what they anticipate from the Bush administration over the next four years, and how they think we can best fight back.

The world changed on November 2, 2004. Until then, ordinary citizens of the United States could claim that our foreign policy, including our invasion of Iraq, was George Bush's doing and that we had not voted for him. In 2000, Bush lost the popular vote. This time he won it by more than 3.5 million votes. The result is that Bush's war has changed into America's war.

Regardless of what the American people intended, they are now seen to have endorsed torture of captives at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, at Bagram Air Base in Kabul and at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba; a rigged economy based on record-setting trade and fiscal deficits; the greatest reliance on secrecy of any postwar American government; the replacement of international law with preventive war; an epidemic of nuclear proliferation; and many other aberrations that can only elicit hostile and defensive reactions in all other nations of the world.

It makes no difference that a majority of U.S. voters seemed to regard November 2 as "An Electoral Affirmation of Shared Values," the title of a front-page article by Todd Purdum in the November 4 *New York Times*. According to a survey that a consortium of all the major news agencies in the country conducted on Election Day, the American public put "moral values" ahead of the economy, terrorism, Iraq, healthcare, taxes and education as the "issue that mattered most."

This signifies to the rest of the world that Americans are not so different from the jihadists surrounding Osama bin Laden. Both groups are Paradise-seeking fanatics beyond the appeals of reason. They are totalitarians in the strictest meaning of the word. The only sensible thing to do is to



Religious fundamentalism could undermine America's legitimacy in global affairs.

try to hold them at bay with the threat of nuclear retaliation, as Iran, North Korea and many other nations are doing today. The thought that American policy is being made by religious fundamentalists may well drain all legitimacy from virtually everything the United States tries to do in the world.

The last significant check on the imperial presidency was the electorate, and on November 2 it failed. Neither the Congress, nor the courts, nor the federalist system of state governments is any longer able to balance the presidency and the forces of militarism. We now know that something more than the working of the political system will be required to save the American republic. The catastrophe of November 2 may mobilize the people to act directly. In the coming months I expect to see an anti-war movement in the United States that will dwarf the demonstrations of the Vietnam era, and I expect to contribute to it in every way I can. ■

CHALMERS JOHNSON is president of the Japan Policy Research Institute, and the author of *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic*.

Where will America stand in the world?

By Chalmers Johnson

How can we fight for working families?

By John J. Sweeney

ALEX WONG / GETTY



The overall fight is clear: We must rein in corporate power and fight for working families' core issues—good jobs, affordable healthcare, a secure retirement and strong communities.

In the next four years, we must stake out and reinforce these areas where we cannot allow the dam to break under the Bush administration. We must create political movements that take advantage of, and maintain, the vibrant political activism of the left in the 2004 presidential campaign. We have to launch proactive fights that are driven by principle and show what we stand for.

We can and will win a fight against privatizing Social Security. We will not allow this basic safety net to be dismantled so corporations can "get their slice." And we must expose the administration's tax breaks as golden cookie jars for the rich.

The entire progressive movement will need to fight back against attacks on workers. We expect to see efforts to strip workers of their freedom to choose unions and to weaken workers' organizations by launching Right to Work bills in many Republican-led states. Look for the administration to attempt, at corporations' behest, to cut overtime pay even further. Of course, they'll do it in the name of family values.

On the offensive front, we need to motivate voters in the middle class who largely succumbed to fear and voted against their own economic security.

We must be proactive about workers' rights. People of social

conscience must take a stand when it comes to workers' freedom to form unions. This is a civil right fundamental to a just society, and it's a fight that we can ill afford to leave on the sidelines.

We must build support for the Employee Free Choice Act that both punishes ruthless employers who use illegal and immoral tactics when workers try to organize and allows employees to freely choose whether to form unions by signing cards.

And we must wage a real fight for affordable healthcare for all. About 45 million are without healthcare, and Americans understand fundamentally that healthcare for children is a moral issue. We must seize the high ground, and show how we stand for people's basic beliefs in this area.

We also must take on those employers that are leading the race to the bottom on wages and healthcare, like Wal-Mart. When the country's largest private employer offers good jobs with a voice on the jobs, decent wages and healthcare, we will all benefit. The labor movement and its partners already have succeeded in staying Wal-Mart's voracious growth in Los Angeles, Oakland and other communities. We can grow this fight.

The problem before us is not how to define the battle cry issue. Our dilemma is to learn how to show that our basic values are America's values and that corporate control of our social agenda poses a fundamental danger to our country and our democracy. ■

JOHN J. SWEENEY is president of the AFL-CIO.

Throughout our nation's history, hope and optimism have defined the American spirit. As a nation, we have always emerged from difficult times of war and economic uncertainty stronger and more unified. And every generation has struggled to leave our children a world that is stronger and more secure than the one left to us. That is our legacy, and it must also be our commitment.

Our nation faces great challenges in the days and months ahead. There is danger abroad and unfulfilled promise here at home. And as it has been for the past four years, the country is divided. But our partisan split, rather than being an excuse for inaction, must be a call to compromise and common sense. Despite our divisions, there are many places where we should be able to agree.

More than three years after the horrific attacks of 9/11, we know we are not as safe as we should be. As we came together after September 11, 2001, we must come together now to enact the urgent recommendations of the 9/11 Commission.

We must move to address our domestic priorities: creating good jobs, increasing access to healthcare, and providing the best possible education for our children. Even on these crucial issues, there is broad bipartisan consensus on concrete steps we could take right now.

To create jobs, we can begin by passing a robust transportation bill that will create 1.7 million new jobs nationwide while modernizing our infrastructure.

We also must reform the tax code and stop rewarding outsourcing. As a matter of basic fairness, no taxpayer should have to subsidize the outsourcing of his or her own job.

Congress should take up legislation to extend health insurance to more parents and children. There also is broad agreement that one of the ways to bring down the cost of healthcare is to allow the safe reimportation of drugs from Canada and elsewhere.

To improve education, we must not only keep the promise of No Child Left Behind, we must match reforms with the resources necessary to make them work for our children. And we must make college education more affordable, so that every student who has the motivation to continue his or her education beyond high school will have the means to do so.

There are places where we differ, as well, and Democrats will stand our ground. The president has proposed privatizing Social Security, which would cut the benefits that provide financial security for millions of seniors and the disabled. Democrats have always protected Social Security and will continue to do so.

The president also pledged to cut the deficit in half. But in the days after the election, he said he wants even more tax cuts and proposed yet another increase in the debt limit. Democrats will continue to fight for fiscal responsibility. And that begins with an honest discussion about how to reduce the enormous deficit.

Within the Congress itself, there must be more discourse and less discord. Democrats and Republicans are on different sides of the aisle, but we have a shared oath and a solemn obligation to serve our country together. As elected officials, our commitment must be to build a future worthy of the sacrifice of our men and women in uniform and worthy of the aspirations of our children. That is my hope for this administration and this Congress. ■

NANCY PELOSI is the House Majority Democratic Leader, and represents California's 8th congressional district.

What issues should Democrats focus on?

By Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.)



MARK WILSON / GETTY

What strategy should the Democrats pursue?

By Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. (D-Ill.)



SCOTT OLSON / GETTY

After the 2004 elections, Republicans are in charge of the White House, the Congress and the Supreme Court. Democrats are left running the Democratic National Committee. What happened?

Democrats and their 527 organizations were very proud of the large numbers of new voters they registered and the get-out-the-vote operation they put in place for Election Day—and they did do a good job. But it wasn't as good as the quiet operation Republicans had. On a state-by-state basis, Bush increased his percentage of the vote over Kerry (versus Gore in 2000) by 2 percent or more in 31 states. By contrast, Kerry decreased (versus Gore in 2000) his percentage of the vote in 24 states.

Bush and the Republicans took their basic message of lower taxes, less government and a strong defense and attacked Kerry with it. Then they called his healthcare proposal a "government-run plan," attacked him on the issue Democrats projected would be his greatest strength—being a decorated soldier who served in Vietnam—and finally, and most devastatingly, pushed the line that Kerry would "do or say anything to be elected president."

Bush, meanwhile, presented himself as a strong and consistent leader, regularly saying "even if you disagree with me you know where I stand." He made the election about fear, terrorism and "moral values."

How did Democrats end up as the party against God, guns, America and life itself?

Between elections Republicans made Democrats vote—that is, put them on record—for or against a series of constitutional

amendments: to keep the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance; to display the Ten Commandments on public buildings; and to put prayer in public schools.

What rights and amendments did Democrats fight for, or try to get Republicans on the record for or against? Unfortunately, the answer is none.

I think Democrats should pursue a long-term human rights and constitutional amendments strategy. I've proposed that Democrats fight to put an individual right to vote in the Constitution (H.J. Res. 28). (That's right, you don't have a citizenship right to vote.) Americans believe education is important and that every student should have a public education of equally high quality. We should put that belief in the Constitution as a new American right (H.J. Res. 29). Kerry said every American had a right to health care. Let's make his belief concrete by putting it in the Constitution (H.J. Res. 30).

The American people are looking for Republicans and Democrats to work together. Human rights and constitutional amendments allow that. They are nonpartisan, non-ideological, non-programmatic and non-special interest. They're for all Americans. And a Democratic agenda promoting new rights for all Americans is the best way to jump-start our party. ■

JESSE L. JACKSON, JR. has represented Illinois' 2nd District in the House of Representatives since 1995. Prior to being elected, he instituted a national non-partisan program that successfully registered millions of new voters in his role as National Field Director of the National Rainbow Coalition.

Unless something changes, we can expect Bush to pack the Supreme Court with justices who threaten every right women have gained. *Roe v. Wade* is the first issue, but equal pay, overtime, all kinds of workers' issues, the war in Iraq—those also are issues of concern.

Clearly, the social conservative movement is all about fear over the roles of women and men. No matter how many women enter the workforce or begin to climb the ladder, their cultural roles never change—they're still wife and mother. Even among our own progressive movement, gender is neither a priority nor an issue we understand deeply. So we have to analyze the situation and understand the role gender plays in this conversation.

It is no small thing to have had the most amazing progressive organizing campaign in my lifetime. I know that this election will convince young women to run for office. With our voter mobilization effort, Vote, Run, Lead (www.voterunlead.org), we seeded

our next step. During training, we brought in a diverse, progressive group of young politicians to speak to young women. They demystified politics and inspired many to consider running.

Young women are not apolitical: Seventy percent of them volunteer and act personally on issues they care about. They like to touch and feel them, engage them by tutoring people one-on-one. It's our job to take that instinct and that talent and show young women that if they want to have an ongoing affect they have to get involved politically.

In the long run, this is the only way we can make permanent change. If we could channel all of the energy spent trying to hold back legislation that negatively affects women's lives into women having power and making policy, it would be a whole other matter. We can't stop fighting, but we also have to get people into power. ■

MARIE WILSON is the president of *The White House Project*.

How can women fight back?

By Marie Wilson

How should we redirect our political creativity?

By Al Jourgensen

They told me that as an artist I should stay out of politics. Some of my peers taunted that it was "moronic" for me to express my opinions—that I shouldn't mix art with politics. This fall, Ministry joined forces with Music for America and Punkvoter.com to register voters throughout our U.S. Evil Doer Tour. So did a lot of other artists, musicians and youth vote organizations to target voters ages 18-29. Guess what? It worked. Young voters showed up en masse: 4.6 million more 18 to 29 year olds voted this year than in 2000. The youth vote is now an invigorated force to be reckoned with.

But our work has just begun. America is still at war. American kids are still dying for oil, Bush's friends are still getting richer off the backs of American young people. College tuition keeps rising (tuition rose again 10 percent last year alone and 30 percent since Bush

first took office). And the fight for healthcare, prescription drugs and a real energy plan to get us out of wars in the Middle East are all still in front of us.

So we'll continue to disseminate information and rally our troops here in the homeland. We'll be in state-by-state battles fighting for justice, ensuring the Senate does not confirm judges who want to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. Most importantly, we'll be preparing for the Senate and House races in 2006.

All of us did our part this year. If I can register several thousand voters at my concerts alone and Punkvoter.com and Music For America can register tens of thousands of voters, the message is clear: Americans want change and it is not going to stop. ■

AL JOURGENSEN is the founder of post-punk industrial band Ministry (www.ministrymusic.org).

The Democrats and progressives were awash in money in 2004. Some of it went to the right places; some of it did not. How do you know? By using a best-practices model to examine who did what in 2004, how effective those efforts were, how to replicate what worked and how to share resources.

Take the efforts aimed at young Americans. Did marketing-based approaches like Citizen Change's "Vote or Die?" campaign get people to the polls or leave them feeling oversold? Did the League of Pissed Off Voters' election guides hit their mark? And whose outreach and fundraising models, like MoveOn.org's, work the best?

This also means rethinking longstanding assumptions. For decades, foundations have said they don't fund media. Fine. Young Americans don't read or watch much media, with the exception of "The Daily Show." And for years, news consumption and voting trended downward together. In 2004, voting went up.

Now is the time to reach those new voters with

media that gives them hope, that speaks to them in their language, about their issues, with a sense of humor. Otherwise, they will feel burned—as if they played their part but the system still didn't work. Good conduits of information will let younger Americans—and all Americans—know that politics doesn't begin and end on one day every four years. It's about being a part of your community, dealing with issues both local and global, empowering yourself and caring about the future.

Technology can help increase efficiency of media production and distribution. For example, no one—yet—is effectively aggregating and distributing youth-oriented and college media about politics and public policy. The nonprofit I founded is trying to help build that infrastructure, and there's no reason it can't happen. We can revolutionize the way a disaffected public views political culture. It's time. ■

FARAI CHIDEYA is founder and editor of *Pop and Politics*

How can we keep young voters engaged?

By Farai Chideya



Election Reflection

What
happened,
and what
we can do
about it.

By David Moberg

LAST SPRING IT LOOKED LIKE John Kerry had a solid chance to knock off George Bush. The economy and the war in Iraq were going badly, and polls on key questions—like whether the country was on the right track—did not bode well for Bush. The campaign and allied groups were financially competitive and well organized. And Democrats were passionate in their fear and loathing of four more years of Bush.

But instead, what we got was four more dreadful years.

How did it happen? What does it portend? There are lots of places to look for explanations—or blame.

Was the problem the candidate?

Kerry, the windsurfer, was aloof and culturally out of touch. He was often slow to make decisions, could be long-winded and ambiguous, and didn't fight back forcefully when his overplayed, if real, honor as a Vietnam vet was viciously assaulted. Not even his supporters deeply warmed to him. But he was an intelligent, decent and moderately progressive man—a man who had once shown as much courage opposing the Vietnam war as he had fighting it. It is uncertain whether any other Democratic candidate would have fared better, especially after the inevitable mauling by the Republican attack machine.

Was it the Kerry campaign?

By failing early on to attack Bush, defend Kerry and offer a bold vision, the campaign wasted the opportunity to define Kerry as somebody other than a consistently liberal flip-flopper (an image that stuck despite its inconsistency). The campaign only began to recover with Kerry's strong debate performance and by forcefully criticizing Bush's handling of the war in Iraq. Kerry had modest, reasonable plans for expanding healthcare, revising global economic policies, and reversing unfair Bush tax and budget policies. But the campaign failed to connect in the final weeks on the key economic issues for working and middle-class voters, who were open to a deal that Kerry failed to close.

Was it the voters?

Certainly Bush voters exhibited widespread ignorance and irrationality in supporting him as a "strong leader," even as he was leading the charge against their own best interests. Days before the election, 72 percent

of Bush supporters said they believed Iraq had weapons of mass destruction or a major development program, and 75 percent believed Iraq provided substantial support to al Qaeda—perceptions proved profoundly wrong by government investigations.

Among Bush's crucial religious right supporters, opposition to abortion or gay marriage was important, but many voted for Bush simply because they thought he was "a good Christian man." One anti-political evangelical preacher ("I care nothing for Social Security or Medicare") warned that "if we do not break the power of the Muslim world now they will kill our children and grandchildren within the next 40 years." But he praised Bush mainly for his Christian campaign rallies and for persuading a young man via telephone to be "born again."

Was it Bush's campaign?

Campaign for America's Future co-director Robert Borosage argues that Bush waged "the most negative and dishonest campaign that we have witnessed by an

been strong four years ago and made a few telling inroads into Democratic constituencies. He prevailed by roughly the same margin in rural and small-town America, but exit polls showed that he made big, disturbing gains in urban areas—particularly in the far-flung suburbs and exurbs that Karl Rove had targeted and where few pro-Kerry forces ventured. Bush also gained among women, most likely on security issues, thus shrinking the gender gap. And in a worrisome trend, Bush gained support from Hispanics, whose growing population had been seen as a harbinger of future Democratic success. Hispanic support for the Republican presidential candidate increased from 21 percent in 1996 to 31 percent in 2000 to 43 percent this year.

And what it wasn't

One of the few bright spots for Democrats was the strong support for Kerry among 18 to 29 years olds, even if this year's fervid youth organizing only maintained that group's share of an expanded voting population. And first-time voters favored

Among Bush's crucial religious right supporters, opposition to abortion or gay marriage was important, but many voted for Bush simply because they thought he was 'a good Christian man.'

incumbent president, at least since Richard Nixon. ... His lies about Kerry's positions, his shameless distortion of his record, his libels of his character were ruthless, unending and brutally effective." Bush lied equally about his own record, but with clever packaging and conviction. As a result, Democratic Leadership Council President Bruce Reed notes, despite growing poverty, inequality and job losses, the candidate of big business and the rich won in 26 of the 28 poorest states.

The Bush campaign matched the progressives' strong suit—a ground campaign of voter registration and mobilization through direct contact. Labor unions and a host of new and old progressive groups greatly expanded their work. But Republicans and the right-wing religious network proved adept on the ground as well, often relying more than progressives did on volunteers.

The result was clear: Bush intensified support—both geographically and demographically—nearly everywhere he had

Kerry slightly, but not by as big a margin as progressives expected. Union members and their households—which slipped from 26 percent to 24 percent of the electorate, as union membership declined and overall turnout increased—voted for Kerry by a 65 percent margin, up slightly from support for Gore in 2000.

Democrats also slightly strengthened their support among families earning less than \$50,000 a year (45 percent of the electorate) and among voters with a post-graduate education (16 percent of voters). But Bush, according to political scientist Philip Klinkner, gained enough among those earning more than \$100,000 to explain his increased margin: The share of total turnout by that group increased by 3 percent and Bush's support increased by 4 percent. At the same time, according to Democratic pollster Stanley Greenberg, Kerry lost ground among less-educated white voters, who should have been with him on class

Continued on page 37

The Ballots at the Back of the Bus

*Most voters
in Ohio chose
Kerry; here's
how the votes
vanished.*

By Greg Palast

INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS

1. Polls open at 7 a.m. and close at 7 p.m.
2. Sample ballots will be available in the polling room for your information.
3. When you enter the polling room, you must be identified before being permitted to vote. You are required to present a valid photo ID and your signature. If you do not have the proper ID, you will be allowed to vote on a provisional ballot.
4. If you are a voter registered by mail, you must present your voter ID card and your signature. If you do not have the proper ID, you will be allowed to vote on a provisional ballot.
5. If you need assistance, you may request assistance from a poll worker. Poll workers are not permitted to assist you in marking your ballot. If you need assistance, you must leave so that the poll worker can assist you in a separate area.
6. You are not permitted to enter the voting booth at the time you are not voting or when you are not permitted to vote.
7. When you are ready to vote, you must place your ballot in the ballot box.
8. If you are not satisfied with your vote, you are required to return to the poll worker to re-enter.
9. If your eligibility is questioned or you are not permitted to vote, you will be given a provisional ballot. If you have a photo ID, you will be given a provisional ballot. If you do not have a photo ID, you will be given a provisional ballot. If you are not permitted to vote, you will be given a provisional ballot. If you are not permitted to vote, you will be given a provisional ballot.

SHANNON O'BRIEN / PALM BEACH POST

This past February, Ohio Secretary of State Ken Blackwell told the president of the State Senate, "The possibility of a close election with punch cards as the state's primary voting device invites a Florida-like calamity." Blackwell, co-chair of Bush-Cheney reelection campaign, wasn't warning his fellow Republican of disaster; he was boasting of an opportunity to deliver Ohio for Team Bush no matter what the voters wanted. And this past Election Day most voters in Ohio wanted JFK, not GWB. But their choice won't count because their votes won't be counted.

The ballots that add up to a majority for John Kerry in Ohio are locked up in two Republican hidey-holes: "spoiled" and "provisional."

Ohio spoiled rotten

In a typical presidential election, 2 million ballots are marked "spoiled" and then chucked in the garbage, uncounted. But a dive into the electoral dumpster reveals something special about these votes. In a precinct-by-precinct analysis of the Florida 2000 race, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission discovered that 54 percent of spoiled ballots were cast by African-Americans. Florida is typical. Nationwide, the number of black votes "disappeared" into the spoiled pile is about 1 million. The other million in the no-count pit come mainly from Hispanic, Native-American and poor white precincts, a decidedly Democratic demographic.

Vote spoilage comes in two flavors. "Overvotes" are where there are too many punches in the cards. And "undervotes" are where the hanging, dimpled and "pregnant" chads created by old punch card machines hang on. Machines can't these kinds of undervotes, but we humans, who know a hole when we see one, have no problem ... if we're allowed to. This is how Katherine Harris defeated Al Gore: by halting the hand count of the spoiled punch cards not, as is generally believed, by halting a recount.

Federal investigators determined that in the 2000 Florida race black voters' ballots spoiled 900 percent more often than white voters, mainly due to punch card error. This year, Ohio was the only one of 50 states to refuse to eliminate or fix these vote-eating machines,

even in the face of a lawsuit by the ACLU.

Apparently, the Ohio Republicans liked what the ACLU found. The civil rights group's expert testimony concluded that Ohio's cussed insistence on forcing 73 percent of its electorate to use punch card machines had an overwhelming racial bias, voiding votes mostly in black precincts. Blackwell doesn't disagree; and he hopes to fix the machinery ... after George Bush's next inauguration. In the meantime, the state's Attorney General Jim Petro, a Republican, postponed the trial date of the ACLU case until after the election.

Fixing the problem is easy. If Ohio had placed a card-reading machine in each polling station, as Michigan did this year, voters could have ensured their vote would tally. If not, they would have gotten new cards.

Blackwell knows that. He also knows that if those reading machines had been installed, almost all of the 93,000 spoiled votes (from overwhelmingly Democratic areas) would have closed the gap on Bush's lead of 136,000 votes.

Jim Crow's provisional ballot

Add to spoiled ballots a second group of uncounted votes, provisional ballots, and the White House would have turned Democrat blue. But that won't happen because of the peculiar way provisional ballots are counted or, more often, *not* counted. The provisional ballot, introduced by federal law in 2002, was proposed by the Congressional Black Caucus to save the rights of those wrongly scrubbed from voter rolls. In Republican-controlled swing states, however, these were twisted into back-of-the-bus ballots unlikely to be tallied. These provisional ballots are counted only at the whimsy and rules of a state's top elections official; and in Ohio, that gives a virtual ballot veto to Bush-Cheney campaign co-chair Blackwell.

In Ohio, more than 155,000 voters were shunted to these second-class ballots. The election-shifting bulge in provisional ballots (more than 3 percent of the electorate) was the direct result of the national Republican strategy that targeted African-American precincts for mass challenges on Election Day.

And Blackwell has a few rules to ensure a large proportion of provisional ballots won't be counted. For the first time in memory, the secretary of state banned counting ballots cast in the "wrong" precinct, though all neighborhoods shared the same slate of presidential candidates.

This is the first time in four decades that a political party systematically barred tens of thousands of black voters.

While investigating for BBC Television, we obtained three dozen of the Republican Party's confidential "caging lists," their title for the spreadsheets that list the names and addresses of Ohio voters they intended to block on any pretext. Every address of the thousands on these Republican hit lists was located in black-majority precincts. You might find that nasty and racist. It may also be a crime.

Before 1965, Jim Crow laws did not bar blacks from voting. Minor technical voting requirements were ap-

plied only to African-Americans. That year, Congress voted to make profiling and impeding minority voters a criminal offense under the Voting Rights Act.

But that didn't stop the Republicans of 2004. Their mass challenge to black voters is not some low-level dirty tricks operation of local party hacks. E-mails show the lists were copied directly to the Republican National Committee's chief of research and to the director of a state campaign.

Many challenges center on changes of address. On one Republican caging list, 50 addresses changed from Jacksonville to overseas—African-American soldiers shipped "over there."

Blackwell has said he will count all the "valid" provisional ballots. However, his rigid regulations are rigged to knock out enough voters to keep Bush's skinny lead alive. Other pre-election maneuvers by Republican officials—late and improbably large purges of voter rolls, rejection of registrations—maximized the use of provisional ballots that will never be counted. For example, a voter wrongly tagged as an ineligible felon voter (and there are plenty in that category, mostly African-Americans), may lose his ballot even though wrongly identified.

Kerry calls the game early

During the campaign it was heartening that John Kerry broke the political *omerta* that seems to prohibit public mention of the color of votes not counted in America. "Don't tell us that in the strongest democracy on earth ... a million disenfranchised African-Americans is the best we can do." The Senator promised the NAACP convention, "This November ... we're going to make sure that every single vote is counted."

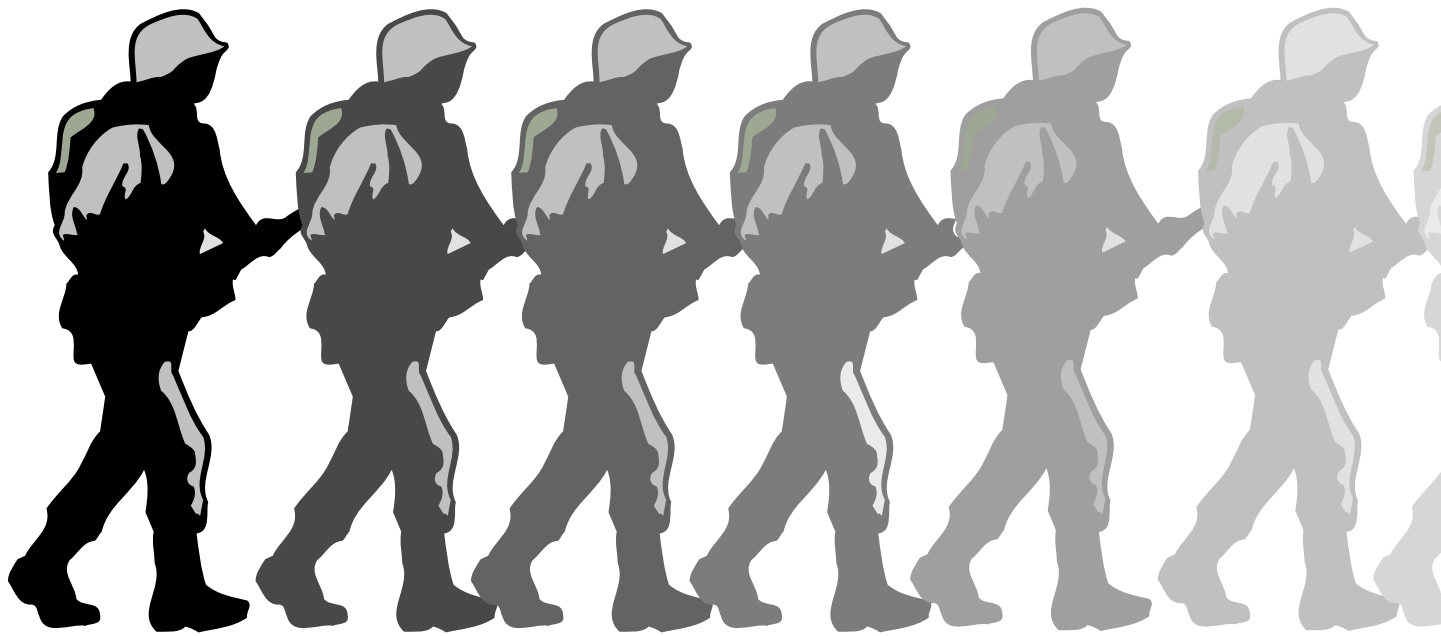
But Kerry waited less than 24 hours to abandon more than a quarter million Ohio voters still waiting for their provisional and chad-spoiled ballots to be counted.

While disappointing, I can understand the cold calculus against taking the fight to the end. To count the ballots, Kerry's lawyers would first have to demand a hand reading of the punch cards. Blackwell, armed with the Supreme Court's *Bush v. Gore* diktat, would undoubtedly pull a "Kate Harris" by halting or restricting a hand count. Most daunting, Kerry's team also would have to litigate each rejected provisional ballot in court. This would entail locating up to a hundred thousand voters to testify to their right to the vote as Blackwell challenged each. Given the odds and the cost to his political career, Kerry bent, not to the will of the people, but to the willpower of the Ohio Republican machine.

We have yet to total the votes lost in missing absentee ballots, in eyebrow-raising touch screen tallies, in purges of legal voters from registries and other games played in swing states. Undoubtedly, Kerry also took New Mexico. But why dwell on these things? Our betters in the political and media elite have told us to get over it. Move on.

To the victors go the spoils of electoral class war. As Ohio's politically ambitious secretary of state brags on his own Web site, "Last time I checked, Katherine Harris wasn't in a soup line, she's in Congress." ■

GREG PALAST
is author of *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy* and a reporter for the BBC Television investigative documentary, *Bush Family Fortunes*. Oliver Shykles and Matthew Pascarella of GregPalast.com contributed to this article.



WHY THE VIETNAM WAR STILL

BY JACKSON LEARS

GEORGE BUSH'S VICTORY IN 2004 signified the triumph of lies. Some of the least examined lies involved the history of the Vietnam War. In their attacks on Kerry's antiwar dissent, Bush and his Swift Boat allies advanced a right-wing narrative of the Vietnam War—a narrative that legitimated current administration policy in Iraq. Popular acceptance of this story required widespread ignorance of what actually happened in our recent past. The diffuse but undeniable influence of the Swift Boat slanders was a symptom of the collective amnesia that threatens democratic debate in the contemporary United States.

"The struggle of man against power," the Czech novelist Milan Kundera wrote, "is the struggle of memory against forgetting." During the 20th Century, control over public perceptions of the past has become an essential strategy for the maintenance of state power. Kundera opened *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* by recalling the disappearance of a Communist leader from official photographs after he had been charged with treason and hanged. Anyone who had questioned the regime's legitimacy could simply be airbrushed out of history. Our postmodern media managers are subtler, but in reshaping the public memory of the Vietnam

War they have accomplished something even more impressive. They have erased the experience of an entire generation.

Since the rise of Ronald Reagan, right-wing journalists and intellectuals have been successfully selling a fictional explanation for American defeat in Vietnam. It is a variant of the "stab in the back" story concocted by German nationalists after their defeat in World War I. The American mission in Vietnam, from the post-Reagan view, was a "noble cause" done in by cowardly campus radicals and their allies in the "liberal media," whose combined pressure on politicians forced the military to fight "with one hand tied behind its back." During the last 25 years, this rightist fairy tale has seeped into our popular culture—in the regularly scheduled rants of talk-radio and cable-television hosts, in films from *Rambo* to *Forrest Gump*, and in the rhetoric of politicians in both parties. By the '90s, even liberals were too cowed by this bizarre account of the Vietnam War to recall the actual events of that era.

Yet for a moment in July, on the last night of the Democratic Convention, it seemed as if one major party, at least, might finally be remembering the truth about the Vietnam War. In different ways, Max Cleland and John Kerry made the same larger point: Despite

having volunteered for the war, many veterans came to see it as a catastrophic mistake, sustained by systematic mendacity. Opposition to this war was a patriotic service. For a moment that night in July, as Cleland and Kerry recalled their commitment and disillusionment, it looked as if our politicians might finally be coming to grips with the real meanings of the American misadventure in Vietnam.

But that hopeful assumption underestimated the tenacity of the right-wing narrative, as well as its centrality to contemporary Republican strategy. The Orwellian Swift Boat Veterans for Truth burst on to the post-convention scene, telling big lies and sowing big doubts about Kerry's medals. In a predictable display of phony "even-handedness," the national media gave the Swift Boat charges equal time with Kerry's defense, as if lies and truth deserved an even break from a responsible press.

The Swift Boat Veterans embraced the "stab in the back" story of defeat in Vietnam. They were enraged that Kerry told the truth about the Vietnam War, as he did in his testimony to Congress in 1971 when he reported the results of the Winter Soldier Investigation. At this investigation, he testified, "over 150 honorably discharged, many highly decorated veterans" acknowledged their



L MATTERS

common participation in acts that could be characterized as atrocities or even war crimes. These men courageously questioned their own conduct, and demanded to know how their government had placed them in conditions that encouraged or even required that conduct. They spoke for themselves and their comrades, those who had died as well as those who lay helpless in veterans' hospitals, forgotten by the prating politicians who publicly claimed to exalt them.

The young Kerry was clear about who was responsible for this disaster. He asked: "Where are the leaders of our country? ... Where are they now that we, the men they sent off to war, have returned? These are the commanders who have deserted their troops. ... These men have left all the casualties and retreated behind a pious shield of public rectitude."

This testimony is simply inadmissible to the sanitized story of the Vietnam War that dominates contemporary politics. The Swift Boat Veterans professed outrage at the very notion that any Americans might have committed atrocities in Vietnam. By focusing on ordinary soldiers and leaving policymakers out of the picture, they avoided the larger meanings of that capacious word, "atrocities"—the carpet bombing, the free fire zones, the use of Napalm and Agent Orange—all the government strategies

sanctioned by the highest military and civilian authority. Faith in American virtue remained intact, and the erasure of collective memory was stunning. About the time of the first debate, a headline in the *Village Voice* read: "Kerry Was Right: New Evidence of Vietnam Atrocities." As if Kerry needed "new evidence" to confirm his own experience and the experience of his contemporaries! Well, apparently he did.

In contrast to the media legitimization of the Swift Boat Veterans' lies, consider the discrediting of the essentially accurate CBS report on Bush's National Guard service. The truth about Bush's service—or lack of it—disappeared beneath a fog of charges and countercharges regarding the authenticity of several letters written by Bush's commanding officer, Lt. Col. Jerry Killian. No matter that the colonel's secretary confirmed the substance of the documents (while asserting that she herself had not typed them). No matter that the former lieutenant governor of Texas, Ben Barnes, admitted publicly that he was "ashamed" of securing preferential treatment for Bush and other wealthy, well-connected young men. The letters could not be authenticated, and that became the story.

The problem here was not that Bush evaded the draft or even that he did so by benefiting from economic privilege. No one should have to apologize for avoiding that vile war by any means necessary. The problem was that his behavior epitomized the hypocrisy of the draft-dodging hawk. Like most of his administration, Bush vigorously supported the war while even more vigorously trying to evade it, and ever since his entry into presidential politics his handlers have concealed their candidate's spotty military record while outfitting him in military costumes and posing him as a courageous commander in chief, brimming with "resolve." He became the quintessential postmodern patriot, for whom the appearance of bravery and command is more important than the actuality.

The acquiescence of the national media allowed this pose to work. The draft-dodging hawks embodied heroic leadership, while his opponent was "perceived" (we were told) as indecisive and weak—this man who courageously volunteered for combat, then came home and courageously criticized the insane policies he had seen on the ground in Vietnam. One does not have to be an uncritical fan of Kerry to feel outrage at the injustice done to him. Under the barrage of Republican disinformation, his noblest moments

became the seed of his undoing. No wonder so many of us, when we encountered the national media coverage of this campaign, felt that we had entered an "Alice in Wonderland" world, as the novelist and Vietnam veteran Tim O'Brien said of the Swift Boat controversy—a world where factual evidence was ignored, common-sense perceptions of reality were reversed, and history was refashioned to meet the needs of those in power.

The consequences for contemporary politics cannot be overestimated. Refusal to come to grips with our defeat in Vietnam—to reflect on the hazards of a morally charged hubris—lies at the core of our current misadventures abroad. Bush's advisers came of age in the shadow of that defeat, determined to deny its significance by reasserting imperial power on a grand scale, just as German nationalists had longed to do in the wake of World War I. That dream of national regeneration, combined with our collective amnesia, lets the Bush administration ignore the growing parallels between the failed policy in Iraq and the failed precedent in Vietnam: the millenarian fantasies used to justify the war; the ignorance of local culture and custom; the reiteration of empty platitudes as chaos looms; the fetish of "free elections;" the soldiers trapped in an impossible assignment—as vulnerable to local hostility as any Western army of occupation has ever been, in any country with a history of colonial domination.

The most important parallel is the government's inability to tell the truth about the war. The lie at the center of the right-wing Vietnam narrative—the stab-in-the back story—was central to Bush's campaign strategy, and continues to underwrite support for his war in Iraq. The belief (against all evidence) that the troops in Vietnam were somehow betrayed by the antiwar movement, rather than by the men who sent them there, remains a powerful rhetorical weapon. It allows Bush and his handlers to equate criticism of government policy with treason—or at best with a failure to "support our troops." The persistence of this twisted logic underscores the continuing relevance of the young John Kerry's charge: that the people who have truly abandoned our troops are the policymakers who sent them on a fool's errand under cover of false claims, and then "retreated behind a pious shield of public rectitude." They've done it again. That is why the Vietnam War still matters. ■

JACKSON LEARS is editor of *Raritan* and author, most recently, of *Something for Nothing: Luck in America* (Viking/Penguin).



The Liberal Waterloo

(Or, finally some good news from Washington!)

BY SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK

THE FIRST REACTION OF PROGRESSIVES TO Bush's second victory was that of despair, even fear: Not simply a bad dream, this nightmarish coalition of big business and fundamentalist populism will roll on, as Bush pursues his agenda with new gusto, nominating conservative judges to the Supreme Court, invading the next country after Iraq and pushing liberalism in the United States one step closer to extinction. However, such an emotional reaction is precisely what we should resist—it only bears witness to the extent liberals have succeeded in imposing their worldview upon us. If one keeps the head cool and calmly analyzes the results, the election appears in a totally different light.

Many Europeans wonder how Bush could have won, with the majority of the intellectual and pop-cultural elite against him. They are now finally forced to confront the underrated mobilizing power of American Christian fundamentalism. Because of its self-evident imbecility, it is a much more paradoxical, properly

postmodern phenomenon than it appears.

Take, for example, the literary bestsellers of U.S. Christian fundamentalism, Tim F. LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins' "Left Behind" series of 12 novels on the forthcoming end of the world that has sold more than 60 million copies. Their story begins with the sudden, inexplicable disappearance of millions of people—the favored souls whom God directly calls to himself in order to spare them the horrors of Armageddon. The Antichrist then appears, a young, charismatic Romanian politician named Nicolae Carpathia, who, after being elected general secretary of the United Nations, moves its seat to Babylon, where he imposes an anti-American world government that disarms all nation-states. The ridiculous plot unfolds until the final battle, when all non-Christians—Jews, Muslims, et al.—are consumed in a cataclysmic fire. Imagine the outcry in the Western liberal media if a similar story written from the Muslim standpoint had become a big bestseller in the Arab countries! It is not the poverty and primitivism of these novels that is so breathtaking, but

rather the strange overlapping between the “serious” religious message and the trashiest conventions of pop-culture commercialism.

My next reflection concerns the basic paradox of democracy as revealed in *The History of the VKP(b)*—the Stalinist bible. Stalin (who ghost-wrote the book) describes a vote at a party congress in the late '20s: “With a large majority, the delegates unanimously approved the resolution proposed by the Central Committee.” If the vote was unanimous, where then did the minority disappear? Far from betraying some perverse “totalitarian” twist, this paradox is built in to the very structure of democracy. Democracy is based on a short-circuit between the majority and the All. In it, the winner takes all and the majority counts as All, retaining all the power, even if this majority is merely a couple hundred votes among millions.

“Democracy” is not merely the “power of, by, and for the people.” It is not enough to claim that, in a democracy, the majority’s will and interests (the two in no way automatically coincide) determine state decisions. Today, democracy is, above all, about formal legalism—the unconditional adherence to a certain set of rules that guarantee societal antagonisms are fully absorbed into the political arena. “Democracy” means that whatever electoral manipulations take place, all politicians will unconditionally respect the results. In this sense, the U.S. presidential elections of 2000 were effectively “democratic”: In spite of obvious electoral manipulations and the patent meaninglessness of the fact that a couple hundred votes in Florida decided who would be president of the entire nation, the Democratic candidate accepted his defeat. In the weeks of uncertainty after the election, Bill Clinton made an appropriately acerbic comment: “The American people have spoken; we just don’t know what they said.” This comment should be taken more seriously than it was meant. To this day, we still don’t know what they said—perhaps because there was no “message” behind the result at all.

However, this does not imply that Bush’s victory was some accidental mistake, a result of fraud or manipulation. Hegel wrote apropos Napoleon that he had to lose two times: Only after Waterloo did it become clear to him how his defeat was not a military accident, but the expression of a deeper historical shift. And the same goes for Bush: He had to win two times in order for liberals to perceive that we are all entering a new era.

In their recent *The War Over Iraq*, William Kristol and Lawrence F. Kaplan wrote: “The mission begins in Baghdad, but it does not end there. ... We stand at the cusp of a new historical era. ... This is a decisive moment. ... It is so clearly about more than Iraq. It is about more even than the future of the Middle East and the war on terror. It is about what sort of role the United States intends to play in the twenty-first century.” One cannot but agree with them. It is effectively the future of the international community that is at stake now—the new rules that will regulate it, what the new world order will be.

A new vision of the New World Order is thus emerging as the effective framework of recent U.S. politics: After September 11, America basically wrote off the rest of the world as a reliable partner. The ultimate goal was no longer the Fukuyama utopia of expanding universal liberal democracy, but the transformation of the United States into a “Fortress America,” a lone superpower isolated from the rest of the world, protecting its vital economic interests and securing its safety through its new military power. This military power not only includes forces for rapid deployment anywhere on the globe, but also the development of space weapons enabling the Pentagon to control the global surface from above. In short, Bush’s America pretends to be a new global empire, but it is NOT. Rather, it continues to act as a nation-state, ruthlessly pursuing its interests.

It is as if recent U.S. politics have been guided by a weird reversal of the well-known ecologists’ motto: Act globally, think locally.

Within these coordinates, every leftist who *thinks* should be glad for Bush’s victory. It is better for the entire world because the contours of the confrontations to come will be drawn in a much starker way. A Kerry victory would have been a kind of historical anomaly, blurring the true lines of division. Let us be honest: Kerry did not have a global vision that would present a feasible alternative to Bush’s politics. Furthermore, Bush’s victory is paradoxically better for both the European and Latin American economies: In order to get the support of the trade unions, Kerry promised more protectionist measures.

However, the main advantage concerns international politics. If Kerry had won, it would have forced liberals to face the consequences of the Iraq war, allowing the Bush camp to blame Democrats for the results of their own catastrophic decisions. Even more, Bush’s victory will dispel any illusions about the solidarity of interests among the developed Western countries, giving a fresh impetus to the painful but necessary process of strengthening new alliances like the European Union or Latin America’s Mercosur. It is a journalistic cliché to praise the “postmodern” dynamic of U.S. capitalism against the “Old Europe” stuck in its regulatory Welfare State illusions. However, at least in the domain of political organization, Europe is now going much further than the United States toward constituting itself as an unprecedented, properly “post-modern,” trans-state collective in which there is a place for anyone, independent of geography or culture.

No reason to despair, then. The prospects are dark today, but remember one of the great Bushisms: “The future will be better tomorrow.” ■

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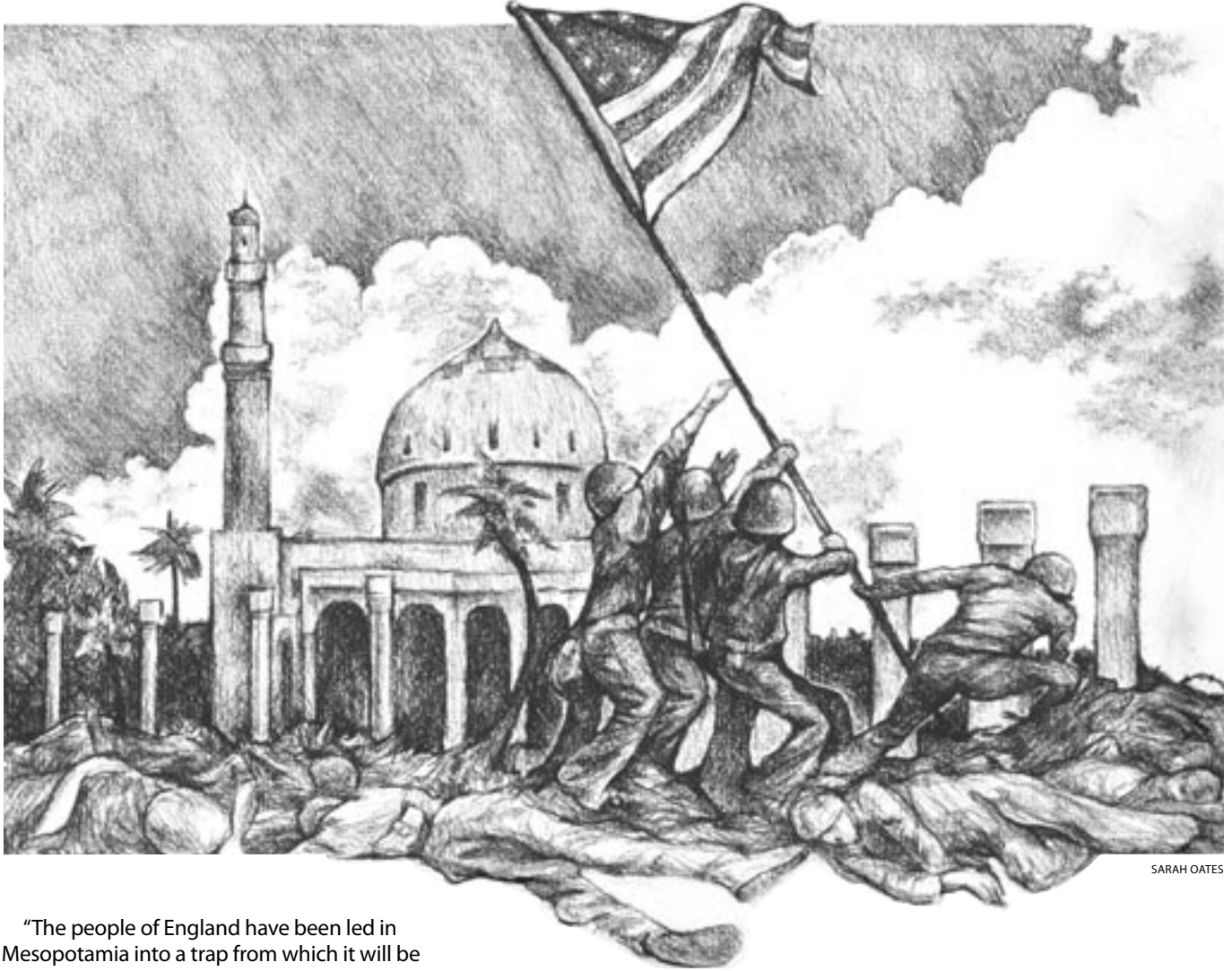
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Fallujah 101

By Rashid Khalidi

A history lesson about
the town we are
currently destroying



SARAH OATES

"The people of England have been led in Mesopotamia into a trap from which it will be hard to escape with dignity and honor. They have been tricked into it by a steady withholding of information. The Baghdad communiqués are belated, insincere, incomplete. Things have been far worse than we have been told, our administration more bloody and inefficient than the public knows. It is a disgrace to our imperial record and may soon be too inflamed for any ordinary cure. We are today not far from a disaster. Our unfortunate troops, Indian and British, under hard conditions of climate and supply are policing an immense area, paying dearly every day in lives for the willfully wrong policy of the civil administration in Baghdad but the responsibility, in this case, is not on the army which has acted only upon the request of the civil authorities."

—T.E. Lawrence, *The Sunday Times*, August 1920

THERE IS A SMALL CITY ON ONE OF THE BENDS OF THE EUPHRATES that sticks out into the great Syrian Desert. It's on an ancient trade route linking the oasis towns of the Nejd province of what is today Saudi Arabia with the great cities of Aleppo and Mosul to the north. It also is on the desert highway between Baghdad and Amman. This city is a crossroads.

For millennia people have been going up and down that north-south desert highway. The city is like a seaport on that great desert, a place that binds together people in what are today Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq and Jordan. People in the city are linked by tribe, family or marriage to people in all these places.

The ideas that came out of the eastern part of Saudi Arabia in the late 18th Century, which today we call Wahhabi ideas—those of a man named Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab—took root in this city more than 200 years ago. In

other words, it is a place where what we would call fundamentalist salafi, or Wahhabi ideas, have been well implanted for 10 generations.

This town also is the place where in the spring of 1920, before T. E. Lawrence wrote the above passage, the British discerned civil unrest.

The British sent a renowned explorer and a senior colonial officer who had quelled unrest in the corners of their empire, Lt.-Col. Gerald Leachman, to master this unruly corner of Iraq. Leachman was killed in an altercation with a local leader named Shaykh Dhari. His death sparked a war that ended up costing the lives of 10,000 Iraqis and more than 1,000 British and Indian troops. To restore Iraq to their control, the British used massive air power, bombing indiscriminately. That city is now called Fallujah.

Shaykh Dhari's grandson, today a prominent Iraqi cleric, helped to broker the end of the U.S. Marine siege of Fallujah in April of this year. Fallujah thus embodies the interrelated tribal, religious and national aspects of Iraq's history.

The Bush administration is not creating the world anew in the Middle East. It is waging a war in a place where history really matters.

A change for the worse

The United States has been a major Middle Eastern power since 1933, when a group of U.S. oil companies signed an exploration deal with Saudi Arabia. The United States has been dominant in the Middle East since 1942, when American troops first landed in North Africa and Iran. American troops have not left the region since. In other words, they have been in different parts of the Middle East for 62 years.

The United States was once celebrated as a non-colonial, sometimes anti-colonial, power in the Middle East, renowned for more than a century for its educational, medical and charity efforts. Since the Cold War, however, the United States has intervened increasingly in the region's internal affairs and conflicts. Things have changed fundamentally for the worse with the invasion and occupation of Iraq, particularly with the revelation that the core pretexts offered by the administration for the invasion were false. And particularly with growing Iraqi dissatisfaction with the occupation and with the images of the hellish chaos broadcast regularly everywhere in the world except in the United States—thanks to the excellent job done by the media in keeping the real human costs of Iraq off our television screens.

The United States is perceived as stepping into the boots of Western colonial occupiers, still bitterly remembered from Morocco to Iran. The Bush administration marched into Iraq proclaiming the very best of intentions while stubbornly refusing to understand that in the eyes of most Iraqis and most others in the Middle East it is actions, not proclaimed intentions, that count. It does not matter what you say you are doing in Fallujah, where U.S. troops just launched an attack after weeks of bombing. What matters is what you are *doing* in Fallujah—and what people see that you are doing.

Fact-free and faith-based

Most Middle East experts in the United States, both inside and outside the government, have drawn on their knowledge of the cultures, languages, history, politics of the Middle East—and on their experience—to conclude that most Bush administration Middle East policies, whether in Iraq or Palestine, are harmful to the interests of the United States and the peoples of this region. A few of these experts have had the temerity to say so, to the outrage of the Bush administration and its supporters, who are committed to what I would call a fact-free, faith-based approach to Middle East policymaking.

The United States is perceived as stepping into the boots of Western colonial occupiers, still bitterly remembered from Morocco to Iran.

These experts predicted that it would be difficult to occupy a vast, complex country like Iraq, that serious resistance from a major part of the population was likely, and that the invasion and occupation would complicate U.S. relations with other countries in the region. It is clear today that all of these fears were well founded.

After 20 months of occupation, the United States continues to make the important decisions in Iraq. Instead of control being exercised through the Coalition Provisional Authority, it takes place through the largest U.S. embassy in the world and its staff of more than 3,000. You can be sure that should the Iraqis try to end the basing of U.S. troops, or try to tear up the contracts with Halliburton and other U.S. companies, or take any other steps that displease the Bush administration, they would be brought up short by the U.S. viceroy, a.k.a. Ambassador John Negroponte.

We, and even more so the Iraqi government and its people, are trapped in a nightmare with no apparent end, in part because those experts who challenged neoconservative fantasies about U.S. troops being received with rice and flowers simply were not heeded. They warned that it is impossible to impose democracy through force in Iraq. Mao Tse Tung said that political power grows out of the barrel of a gun; he did not say democracy does. And it doesn't.

The stench of hypocrisy rises when the United States, a nation supposedly committed to democratization and reform, does not hesitate to embrace dictatorial, autocratic and undemocratic regimes like those of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Tunisia and now even Libya, simply because they act in line with U.S. security concerns or give lucrative contracts to U.S. businesses. The United States claims to be acting in favor of democracy, yet embraces Qaddhafi! People in the Middle East notice this gap between word and deed—even if Americans don't notice the things being done in our name.

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RASHID KHALIDI
is the Edward Said Professor of Arab Studies at Columbia University and author, most recently, of *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East*.

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BY ROBERT PARRY

Too Little, Too Late

George W. Bush's electoral victory is chilling proof that conservatives have achieved dominance over the flow of information to the American people and that even a well-run Democratic campaign stands virtually no chance for

national success without major changes in how the news media operates.

It is not an exaggeration to say today that the most powerful nation on earth is in the grip of an ideological administration—backed by a vast network of right-wing think tanks, media outlets and attack groups—that can neutralize any political enemy with smears, such as the Swift Boat ads against John Kerry's war record, or persuade large numbers of people that clearly false notions are true, like Saddam Hussein's link to the 9/11 attacks.

The outcome of the 2004 election also highlights perhaps the greatest failure of the Democratic-liberal side in American politics: a refusal to invest in the development of a comparable system for distributing information that can counter the right's potent media infrastructure. Democrats and liberals have refused to learn from the

lessons of the Republican-conservative success.

The history is this: For the past quarter century, the right has spent billions of dollars to build a vertically integrated media apparatus—reaching from the powerhouse Fox News cable network through hard-line conservative newspapers and magazines to talk radio networks, book publishing, well-funded Internet operations and right-wing bloggers.

Using this infrastructure, the conservatives can put any number of "themes" into play that will instantaneously reach tens of millions of Americans through a variety of outlets, whose messages then reinforce each other in the public's mind.

Beyond putting opposing politicians on the defensive, this right-wing machine intimidates mainstream journalists and news executives who will bend over backward

and cater to the conservative side, do almost anything to avoid being tagged with the career-threatening tag of “liberal.”

Liberal resistance

In contrast to the right's media juggernaut, the left relies largely on a scattered network of cash-strapped Web sites, a few struggling magazines and a couple of hand-to-mouth satellite TV networks.

Plus, the evidence is that wealthy progressives still don't “get it.” Even with the election looming, Air America, a promising AM radio network founded to challenge Rush Limbaugh and the right-wing talk radio monopoly, was hobbled by the refusal of rich liberals to invest in the venture.

In a new book, *Road to Air America*, Sheldon Drobny, one of the network's founders, describes his frustrating appeals to East and West Coast “limousine liberals” who didn't want to engage in the project. I have encountered similar rebuffs dating back to the early '90s, after my experiences as a mainstream investigative journalist for the Associated Press and *Newsweek* convinced me that the biggest threat to American democracy was the growing imbalance in the national news media.

Yet even as conservative foundations were pouring tens of millions of dollars into building hard-edged conservative media outlets, liberal foundations kept repeating the refrain: “We don't do media.” One key liberal foundation explicitly forbade even submitting funding requests that related to media projects.

What I saw on the left during this pivotal period was an ostrich-like avoidance of the growing threat from the right's rapidly developing news media infrastructure.

Right-wing money

As the liberals stayed on the sidelines in the '80s and

'90s, the conservative media gained powerful momentum from foreign sources of money, particularly from South Korean theocrat Sun Myung Moon and Australian media mogul Rupert Murdoch.

Moon alone invested hundreds of millions of dollars in the *Washington Times* and other conservative outlets, while gaining protection for his dubious money operations from Republican defenders inside the U.S. government.

The right also made clear that its plan was to wage the “war of ideas,” which conservatives did not mean in a metaphorical sense. The right's goal has been to destroy or at least marginalize its enemies through various kinds of information warfare. To reverse Prussian military strategist Karl von Clausewitz's famous dictum, one might say that for conservatives the “war of ideas” is merely the continuation of violent conflict by other means, including the use of propaganda and disinformation.

Yet, instead of joining this ideological battle, the liberal-Democratic side largely divided up its money between do-good projects, such as buying up threatened wetlands, and spending on activism, such as voter registration and get-out-the vote drives. While there's nothing wrong with these activities, the election's outcome has demonstrated again that in an age of media saturation, street-level activism isn't enough.

Even when liberal money is earmarked for media, the funds are usually controlled and spent by political activists. For instance, Campaign 2004's “Media Fund,” run by former Clinton administration official Harold Ickes, spent millions of dollars from liberal donors on TV ads placed with mainstream media outlets. Little, if anything, was spent on building year-in-year-out media, like the conservatives have done.

That means that at the end of a campaign, nothing of permanence is left behind. The liberals wait until the next election cycle to gin up their operations again, while the conservatives spend the next four years, every day, pitching their arguments to the American people and making their political base even stronger.

The end result of this imbalance has been that American democracy has been diminished. Indeed, the great American experiment with a democratic republic may be on the verge of becoming meaningless, since much of the information distributed through the conservative echo chamber is either wrong or wildly misleading—and since the mainstream press has been so thoroughly housebroken.

No birthright

Yet, while it's certainly true that the Bush administration and its allies have shown little regard for truthful information, it's also a legitimate criticism of the Democrats and progressives that they haven't fought nearly as hard as they should for hon-

est information, the oxygen of any healthy democracy.

While many Americans see information as a birthright that is supposed to be delivered to them by the press like a newspaper thumping on the front doorstep, it is really a right that must be fought for like any other important right.

As George W. Bush celebrates his historic victory, the Democrats, left-of-center foundations and wealthy American liberals should finally recognize that their long pattern of starving honest, independent media has contributed to putting the nation—and the planet—on the edge of catastrophe.

John Kerry's well-fought campaign—and the youthful energy that surrounded it—may have been an encouraging sign, but the hard truth is: It was too little, too late. ■

ROBERT PARRY, who broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the '80s for the Associated Press and Newsweek, most recent book is *Secrecy & Privilege: Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq*. It can be ordered at secrecyandprivilege.com.



A detail from Joel Pelletier's *American Fundamentalists (Christ's Entry into Washington in 2008)*, which depicts more than 200 American fundamentalists and is based on James Ensor's 1888 painting, *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* (www.americanfundamentalists.com).



Pushed to the wall, Argentinians may have come up with the answer to the industrial working world's prayers.

BY MICHAEL ATKINSON

Helping Themselves

There may not be a more thoroughly ravaged national economy on the planet than Argentina's—it's a poster child for IMF wrack and ruin. As revealed in grueling, horrifying detail in Fernando Solanas' 2004 documentary

Memoria del Saqueo (shown here only in film festivals), the last 30 years or so have been a relentless litany of bureaucratic power grabs, political lies, privatization sell-offs and insidious opportunism, much of it at the International Monetary Fund's insistence and due to President Carlos Menem's bald-faced carpetbagging. In just a few decades a country that boasted South America's most prosperous middle class was converted into a nation of scrambling beggars, saddled with an excess of 20 percent unemployment and a national bankruptcy that outscaled any other in world history.

Solanas' film may be too outraged and too crystal clear in its history lesson to be released in this country, but in its stead we have Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein's *The Take*, which thumb-nails the last few years of Argentine economic freefall. In both

The Take

Written and directed by
Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein

films, at least, we are witness to footage of street protests so huge and of a boiling citizenry so engaged and aware of the perpetrators of their crisis that we're given cause to wonder if it'll take a wholesale economic disaster here before Americans decide to similarly take their lives and livelihoods into their own hands. Most of the Buenos Aires rioters' violence was perpetrated upon ATMs and bank buildings. With four more Bush years ahead, we may not have long to wait.

Lewis and Klein's movie confronts that reality immediately, introducing us to the "globalized ghost town" of empty Argentine factories, and reminding us that although this is Buenos Aires, "it could be anywhere."

The film's focus, however, is on a movement to reclaim bankrupt factories with collectives formed by the laid-off laborers. It's such a fantastic scenario, right in the dark heart of Globalization Central, that it seems like a schoolkid's daydream come true, and the filmmakers are as amazed as we are. The movement itself is not small: Approximately 15,000 workers have "occupied" some 200 ownerless businesses, from private schools to hotels to the auto parts factory that Klein and Lewis focus on. There, a new collective of unemployed machinists struggles to legitimize itself and obtain a legal right to run the shop. In this dynamic, the workers typically get equal salaries and vote in assemblies on all business dealings.

From every conceivable perspective save that of the companies' old owners, who want their concerns back now

that they're solvent and functioning, the collective model is the optimum manner for human business: fair, inspiring, effectual, non-exploitative.

"I don't know why it was so hard for the bosses," a middle-aged member of a suit-making company collective says about running a profitable enterprise. "You just add and subtract."

Lewis and Klein's modest movie has an embarrassingly patronizing tone but a triumphant arc: Among other happy endings, the seminal collective of middle-aged seamstresses that runs the Brukman suit manufacturer weather a lockout and a harrowing street clash with police before winning back their factory. Because it's a movement that began from the ground up, like unions, this proto-Communist structure has a chance of becoming an integral part of the Third World landscape. But it's also dismayingly vulnerable to government intervention and steamrolling international capitalism; one doubts that the WTO will let the Argentine "National Movement of Recovered Factories" get too large, too pervasive or too successful.

Still, Argentines have reason to be proud of their productive resistance, if not for everything else: As Lewis and Klein show, when Menem arose from his lair to run for a third presidency—this after having sold every imaginable resource and service to foreign companies so that even the street signs have MasterCard logos on them—he almost won. Like Americans, Argentines are susceptible to the hard sell, to messianic advertising and comforting untruths. But in being pushed to the wall, they may have come up with the answer to the industrial working world's prayers. ■

MICHAEL ATKINSON, a film critic for the *Village Voice* and most recently author of *One Hundred Children Waiting for a Train*, writes on film for *In These Times*.



Burnt Sugar: Musical revolutionaries intent on creating music that is reflective of modern society.

BY DON THRASHER

Rebirth of the Cool

Many modern jazz musicians are staunch traditionalists, more likely to parrot genteel sounds from the past than create new music imprinted with their own generational personality. That's not true of adventurous

New York-based experimental jazz ensemble Burnt Sugar, one act firmly entrenched in the 21st Century.

The multicultural group, which fluctuates in size from 12 to 20 players, truly transcends musical and social boundaries. The players are male and female, black and white, Americans and natives of Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Many of the musicians come from a free jazz background, but there are also veterans of rock, classical, big band jazz, hip-hop, Celtic and funk, among other styles. All of these influences figure heavily into Burnt Sugar's genre-blending improvisational approach.

The group's instrumental make-up is equally eclectic, starting with a core of two drummers, several keyboards, and electric and acoustic bass. The rest of the instrumentation, however, varies from show to show, ranging from horns,

strings and electric guitars to laptops, turntables and unconventional vocalists.

Burnt Sugar is the brainchild of guitarist, author and long-time *Village Voice* writer Greg Tate, who based the group's multiple instrument approach on Miles Davis' landmark fusion album *Bitches Brew*.

"Miles believed the only way you make anything interesting happen is to take the best musicians you can find and force them to play beyond what they know," Tate says. "They can't play by rote because you've created an environment where nothing conventional is really going to hold water. You can't think about if it's the right move; it's about being in the moment, which is what jazz is supposed to be about."

To prevent Burnt Sugar's music from devolving into self-indulgent jam band territory, early in the group's development Tate began using

conduction, a system of baton gestures devised by Butch Morris. Conduction allows the band leader to manage the flow of the music, but more importantly control who is playing, what they are playing and when they are playing it.

"Conduction is a 21st Century extension of jazz because you can privilege the moment, the improvisation and spontaneity, the way jazz always has," Tate says. "But you can do things that are very similar to what people are doing with samplers, laptops, turntables and other methods. You can literally dissect and collage music in an insane way but you're doing things live with a band that people are doing sitting at an editing desk."

Using this method, Burnt Sugar has amassed an impressive catalog. The group has released six discs under their own Trugroid imprint since its debut studio album *Blood*

on the Leaf: Opus No. 1, came out in 2000. The latest CD, *Not April in Paris*, was recorded in March during Burnt Sugar's brief European tour and released in September. Two other shows recorded during that tour are slated for future release.

"People talk about having stuff on the shelf," says Jared Michael Nickerson, the group's electric bass player and business manager. "We not only have the two live CDs ready to go but we have half of our next studio CD done. Material is not going to be a problem for this band."

"With this kind of group we almost had to make up for lost time," Tate says. "I think we had to legitimize this way of working for people and so I was very determined early on to show the range of things the band could do. I wanted to saturate the market as if we had been around a much longer period of time so by the time we really got our stuff together people would've absorbed all the studio stuff."

"It has worked out well," adds Tate, a graduate of Howard University and founding member of the Black Rock Coalition. "The group is kind of like a big musical multi-purpose room where the musicians can expand their voice and vernacular and I can get off some of my political agendas but not in an in-your-face way."

In their own way, the members of Burnt Sugar are musical revolutionaries intent on reviving jazz from its anemic state and injecting it with the depth, power and adventurousness of Miles Davis, Ornette Coleman and other kindred spirits. By doing so, Tate and company are creating music that is reflective of modern society and, more importantly, charting a path for the healthy future of jazz. ■

DON THRASHER writes on music for *In These Times*.

Fallujah 101

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The United States, in fact, has a far from sterling record in promoting democracy in the Middle East. Initially it started off on a better footing. It opposed colonial rule and promoted self-determination, as in President Wilson's Fourteen Points after World War I. But when the United States returned to the Middle East after World War II, it soon supported anti-democratic regimes simply because they provided access to oil and military bases.

If you look carefully, what the Bush administration seems to mean by democracy in the Middle East is governments that do what the United States wants.

Conquer and plunder

Middle Eastern economics is another area about which we hear very little in our media. Americans may not be aware of it, but the wholesale theft of the property of the Iraqi people through privatization was prominently reported all over the Middle East. A recent case involved the handover

of Iraqi Airways to an investor group headed by a family with close ties to the Saddam Hussein regime. The airline is worth \$3 billion, because in addition to valuable landing slots all over Europe and a few tattered airplanes, Iraqi Airways owns the land on which most of the airports are built.

Such cases, and there are many, cause deep anger against the United States, and evoke bitter resistance to pressures for economic liberalization that people in the region interpret as the looting of their country's assets.

These privatization measures arouse deep suspicion in the Middle East, because of fears that the region's primary asset, oil, may be next.

Here, too, history is all-important. Since commercial quantities of oil were discovered in the Middle East at the turn of the 20th century, decisions over pricing, control and ownership of these valuable resources were largely in the hands of giant Western oil companies. They decided prices. They decided how much in taxes they would pay. They decided who controlled the local governments. They decided how much oil would be produced. And they decided ev-

everything else about oil, including conditions of exploration, production and labor.

In those seven decades the people of the countries where this wealth was located obtained few benefits from it. Only with the rise of OPEC and the nationalization of the Middle East oil industries and the oil price rises in the '70s did the situation change. Sadly, it was the oligarchs, the kleptocrats and Western companies that benefited most from the increased prices.

Fears that they will lose their resources shape much of the nationalism of the peoples of the Middle East. And events in Iraq only enhance these fears.

By invading, occupying and imposing a new regime on Iraq, the United States may be following, intentionally or not, in the footsteps of the old Western colonial powers—and doing so in a region that within living memory ended a lengthy struggle to expel colonial occupations. They fought from 1830 to 1962 to kick out the French from Algeria. From 1882 to 1956 they fought to get the British out of Egypt. That's within the lifetime of every person over 45 in the Middle East. Foreign troops on their soil against their will is deeply familiar. ■

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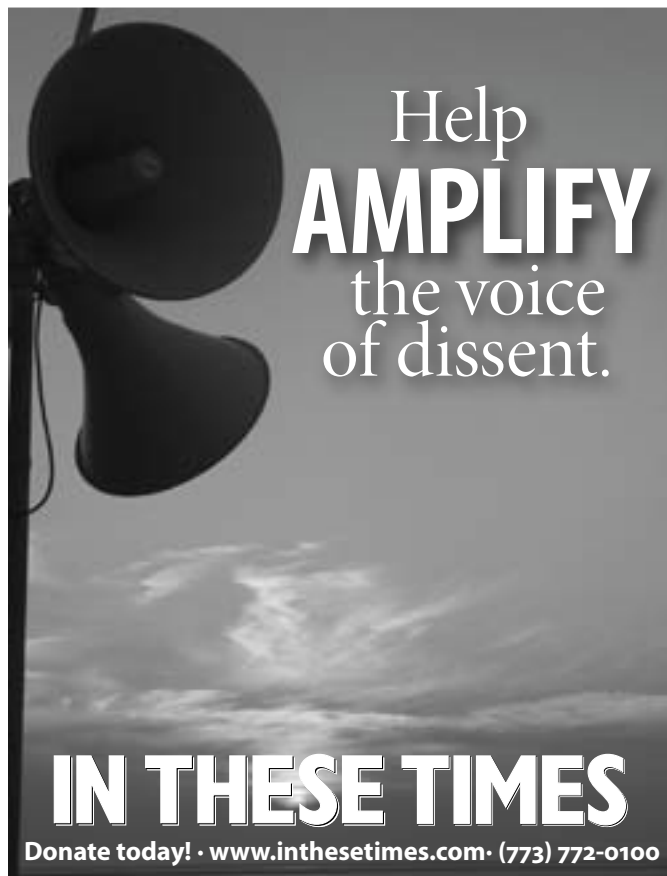
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Election Reflection

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and economic issues but voted disproportionately Republican on cultural issues.

Parsing the issues

On the major issues facing voters, Kerry won strongly among those most concerned about the economy, Iraq and such issues as healthcare, Social Security and education (all together about 47 percent of voters). Bush won decisively among those worried about terrorism (19 percent) and so-called “moral values” (22 percent).

Clearly, it made a big difference whether campaigns got voters to frame their decision more on Iraq or on terrorism, on jobs or on abortion. For example, union members overwhelmingly focused on issues (51 percent) rather than personal character-values (24 percent), making them more open to Kerry. Among issues for unionists, the economy-jobs and Iraq were primary, even though moral values ranked first for 16 percent. By shifting their focus, unions affected the vote of key groups: Union members who owned guns voted for Kerry by a margin that was 32 percent greater than gun owners in the general public (who were strongly pro-Bush); union members who went to church weekly voted for Kerry by a margin 32 percent higher than churchgoers at large; and white male union members gave Kerry a 21 percent margin of support (while Bush won white males overall by 18 points).

Refighting the culture war

In the great debate about how moral values (read: a mishmash of gays, guns, God, abortion and estimates of personal character) determined this election, a few things are clear. The well-organized religious-right vote made a difference, playing the role in the Republican Party that the unions play in the Democratic Party, but regular churchgoers contributed about the same to Bush's victory as in 2000. Many values voters are hard-core right-wingers whose support Democrats will never win. But others have competing frameworks for decisions, and progressives could persuade them with a convincing case on class and economic issues, despite cultural conflicts.

Finally, it makes sense to compete on values. Not by seeing who can shout “God bless America” the loudest, but with progressives making the moral case for equality, democracy, progressive taxation, and

universal healthcare and education.

As Clinton effectively argued in his 1992 campaign, Democrats should advocate both individual rights and social responsibility—for everyone, including big corporations. But political realities must also be confronted when advocating for cultural change: At a time when Americans are moving toward acceptance of gay rights and civil unions, pushing hard for gay marriage was politically unwise, even if it contributed only marginally to Kerry's defeat.

Kitchen table issues

Indeed, despite the defeat, most Americans side with the progressive Democratic position on many key issues. In a post-election poll by Greenberg, for the Institute for America's Future, Americans favored preserving Social Security over private retirement accounts by 57 percent to 40 percent, enforcing labor and environmental protections in trade agreements by 58 percent to 33 percent, and fundamentally reforming healthcare over relying on market competition by 72 percent to 24 percent. If Kerry had delivered a stronger economic message in the final weeks, Greenberg argues, he likely would have won.

The rough road ahead

But Bush won, and now he will begin pushing an agenda that he only sketchily revealed in his campaign:

- Partially privatize Social Security
- Provide permanent tax cuts (including repeal of the estate tax) for the rich
- Radically reform the tax code (possibly a national sales tax or flat tax but clearly shifting taxes from the rich to everyone else)
- Institute greater corporate deregulation and tort reform (freeing corporations from public oversight and the free-market discipline of lawsuits)
- Drill for oil in Alaskan wilderness
- Provide greater freedom for media concentration
- Nominate more right-wing judges—threatening federal government regulatory authority as well as abortion rights
- Continue budget deficit strategy to “starve the beast” of non-military government programs.

But the Bush agenda faces some obstacles despite a stronger Republican hold on Congress. The American public doesn't support much of what he intends to do, and conservatives are growing more di-

vided over the Iraq war and deficits. Bush's policies—with big trade and budget deficits and regressive taxation—threaten the weak economic recovery. In the long run, Bush's policies will only worsen the problems he claims to address. But how long—and how much damage—will it take before enough Americans wake up?

The challenge for Democrats is not to seek some common ground with an administration that is interested only in its surrender. Nor is it rhetorical repositioning for the next election. Rather, the first task is to determine what is right for most Americans, then how to win. The battle starts by challenging the immorality, ineffectiveness and duplicity of the Bush agenda, and fighting for a clear alternative.

At its core, the domestic alternative should include universal healthcare, progressive taxation, lifelong and affordable education, guarantees of a living wage and a secure retirement, rights of workers to unionize, greater public support for advanced research (including alternative energy), and corporate accountability.

Internationally, it should include social regulation of the global economy, a new commitment to broad-based economic development (not just free trade), international cooperation to destroy terrorist networks, pressure on both sides to settle the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, dismantling nuclear arsenals, and repudiation of imperial ambitions in favor of an international golden rule—do unto others as we would want other nations to do unto us.

This may seem ludicrously ambitious in the gloomy light of defeat. But most Americans already support most of these ideals, and acting on them would deliver a better life to the vast majority of people here and abroad. But the practical task of winning requires reinforcing and expanding the infrastructure built for this election by Democrats and allies—including direct voter contact and a network of think tanks, publications and electronic media—as part of a permanent mobilization. There must be renewed emphasis on building real, grassroots organizations of committed citizens who can operate throughout the country, starting with a commitment to help unions organize the unorganized.

Break down the infamous red and blue map of America more finely, and there are blue—or at least purple—patches throughout the country. There's no way forward without bringing the fight everywhere and taking the long and principled view, trusting in democracy, but organizing to make it work. ■

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Voices

Continued from back cover

poster to the blog of Operation Truth (www.optruth.org), a nonpartisan Web site that bills itself as a "voice of the troops," reported from an emergency "recruitment summit" this summer that reenlistment and recruitment rates for the Army Reserves are falling well below targets.

Disquiet also appears among soldiers in Iraq, where 52 percent of troops rated their morale as low or very low in a 2003 Army survey. And a study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in July found that about one in six returning infantry soldiers, most of whom had seen combat, suffered from mental disorders.

A number of organizations have been founded that support the soldiers but not the war. One of these, Military Families Speak Out has grown from two families in 2002 to more than 1,800 members. Nancy Lessen, a Military Families founder, reports that for the first time she is hearing from entire units that say, "We served in Iraq and we don't want to go back." One soldier told her, "If any reporter needs to understand how we feel about the war, all they need to do is come to Iraq and read what's on the walls of the outhouses."

Much of the evidence of opposition within the ranks comes up in one-on-one conversations. Army Sgt. Fred Bemis (not his real name) a 30-year-old Army sergeant, is among them.

Bemis joined the Army in 2000. His father and grandfather served in the military, and he wanted benefits for his family. Of his first time there, Bemis says, "There was death all around. I damn sure don't want to go back to that. I was thinking of reenlisting. If it wasn't for this war, I might have." His enlistment was supposed to end early next year, but he got, "stop-lossed" and is about to be redeployed to Iraq. Bemis says he's now considering joining an antiwar group when he gets out.

"When I went [to Iraq] to begin with, there was a mission," he says. But when the reasons behind the mission proved to be false, he felt betrayed. "I don't trust the people sending me over there. I have to stay focused, give it 100 percent. I just don't agree with it. The war cannot be won. It won't be won, not now, not ever. We're getting maimed for bullshit."

Soldiers opposed to the war frequently voice that sentiment, and the word itself, in a kind of all-purpose sneer that in the tradition of underground protest betrays much and little. The speech rights of soldiers are limited by regulation and tradition. Punishment for breaching that limit can range from ostracism to court martial.

"There's rights and then there's the climate," says a military counselor. Or, as a GI e-mailing from Kuwait last year noted

wryly: "There's this invisible line. If you cross it, you could do a lot of dishes."

Military men and women making political statements while in uniform are particularly vulnerable. Drew Plummer, a young petty officer in the Navy, attended an antiwar demonstration while home on leave as the war began. He was convicted of making disloyal statements and demoted for telling a reporter there that he was in the military and that he opposed the war. Plummer has been absent without leave since August, and his father says he has no idea where his son is.

Punishment and threat of punishment aren't the only reasons soldiers' voices

often go unheard. While in combat zones, they speak to the American public through the filter of journalists, if at all. Before being sent to Iraq, Bemis says, GIs attend a mandatory "media awareness" session where they're taught to avoid saying much of anything to reporters.

"Military people feel their opinion

'We're getting maimed for bullshit.'

doesn't matter," John Hustad said in March 2003, explaining why he and fellow Army reservist Todd Arena wrote "An open letter from the troops you support." Published on punkplanet.com and various blogs, they urged "citizen-soldiers" to question the war and to speak out.

Soldiers bellyache all the time, but only a minority turn complaint into defiance.

Maybe what's most noteworthy about resistance within the military is that, against the risks and inertia and considerable odds, it exists. ■

NAN LEVINSON, a Boston-based journalist, is author of *Outspoken: Free Speech Stories*.

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW





STEFAN ZAKLIN / GETTY

BREAKING THE CODE OF SILENCE

By Nan Levinson

"If any reporter
needs to
understand
how we feel
about the war,
all they need to
do is come to
Iraq and read
what's on the
walls of the
outhouses."

When members of the Army's 343rd Quartermaster Company refused orders in Iraq last month they considered too dangerous, it didn't surprise Michael Hoffman. He had expected something like this. Hoffman, 25, went to Iraq with the Marines, then returned to help found Iraq Veterans Against the War this past July.

"When [soldiers] are asked to put their life on the line for no clear reason. ..." he says, breaking off. "They're still human beings and they still have a breaking point."

The national conversation about the war largely has taken place absent those who are fighting it. The military makes it hard for its members to speak independently. In a culture that prizes obedience, loyalty and duty, no one is rewarded for breaking rank. Further, the Bush administration over the past three years has sent the message that dissent is un-American.

Because dissent is discouraged, the extent of it is hard to pin down. Yet resistance has been there since the war began, and signs of dissent are now popping up with increasing frequency. Calls to the GI Rights Hotline (1-800-394-9544) also spiked, and now hold steady at about 2,800 a month.

From 2002 to 2003, according to military records, conscientious objection (CO) applications tripled for the Army and quadrupled for the Marines, the two branches most involved in combat in Iraq. The actual number of applications, however, is probably much higher. Official numbers reflect only those applications that make it to headquarters. CO applicants complain they find it hard to get accurate information about the process and are discouraged from applying once they do. Military counselors estimate that several hundred are in the works.

As hundreds, perhaps thousands, are quietly trying to avoid being shipped to Iraq, at least six soldiers have fled to Canada, where they are petitioning for refugee status. A handful of resisters have made their protest public, and one received punishment harsh enough for Amnesty International to adopt him as a prisoner of conscience.

Not only is the military finding it hard to retain troops, but some branches are having trouble attracting new members. The National Guard acknowledged missing its recruitment goals for the first time in 10 years, and two National Guardsmen filed lawsuits challenging the stop-loss provision that allows the military to extend enlistment terms involuntarily. An anonymous

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